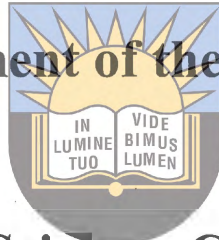


***E-Governance and Participatory Civil Engagement in  
Local Government: The Case of the Nelson Mandela  
Bay Municipality (NMBM).***

**By**

**Tendai Makiwa**

**In Fulfillment of the Degree**



**Master of Social Sciences Communication**  
University of Fort Hare  
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**in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities**

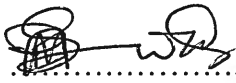
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**November 2009**

**Supervisor: Mr. O Osunkunle**

## DECLARATION

I, Tendai Makiwa, do hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work and that all other people's work used has been fully acknowledged. I further declare that I have never submitted this work for any award at any university. The dissertation is being submitted in fulfillment of the degree Master of Social Sciences Communication in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Fort Hare, South Africa.

Signed  .....



Date: 08 December 2009

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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To my family, Tamara and Tendai Junior, thanks for the comfort and support that gave me the courage to carry on during challenging circumstances. Your helping hands and warm hearts will always be cherished forever. To Junior; this is just an introduction, I look upon you to take it from here and make our family proud.



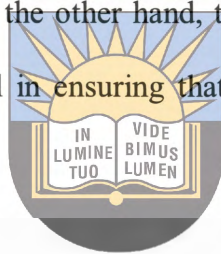
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Finally, I would like to thank the Govan Mbeki Research and Development Committee for the financial assistance provided during the 2009 academic year. It really made a huge difference given the distance I had to travel for the data collection process.

## **ABSTRACT**

This study is a qualitative investigation of the contemporary practice of electronic citizen engagement in governance (e-governance). Semi-structured interviews and document analysis were the data collection techniques utilized. The study builds on the concept of the Public Sphere (Habermas, 1979), and the Participatory Communication concept to examine the nature of participation that e-governance had brought in the South African local government arena with the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality (NMBM) as the case study. The findings were that the municipality's website (where the interactions took place) was being utilized more as an information dissemination tool as compared to a deliberative platform that was envisaged by Habermas. The analysis identified lack of a properly articulated Internet strategy to direct e-governance within the municipality. On the other hand, there was a lot of commitment both at the national and local government level in ensuring that e-governance was a reality in South Africa.

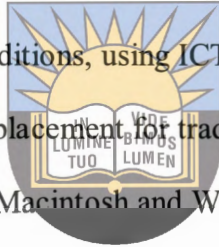


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## DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Deliberative Democracy.....** This term is used to refer to the kind of polity in which political and governmental decisions are carried out through participatory engagement of most (if not all) stakeholders concerned within a society.

**E-democracy.....** “A collection of attempts to practice democracy without the limits of time, space and other physical conditions, using ICT [Information and Communication Technolog(ies)] ..., as an addition, not a replacement, for traditional ‘analogue’ political practices.” (Hacker and van Dijk, 2000) in Macintosh and Whyte (2006: 1).



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**E-governance.....** The utilization of electronic means of communicating and making other transactions between government and citizens (G2C), and government to businesses (G2B), as well as in internal government operations (G2G) to simplify and enhance democratic, government and business facets of governance (Backus, 2001).

**E-participation.....** Participation in governmental issues through the use of electronic means e.g computers and the Internet.

**E-service delivery.....** This term is used to refer to the process whereby the government provides services to its citizens through the use of Information and Communication Technologies ICTs.

**Information and Communication Technologies....** The term is used to refer to “a broad field encompassing computers, communications equipment and the services associated with them. It includes the telephone, cellular networks, satellite communication, broadcasting media and other forms of communication” (Lallana, 2003).



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# LIST OF FIGURES

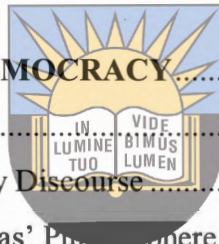
Figure 3.1: A continental and provincial look at the NMBM .....	46
Figure 3.2: A closer look at the NMBM .....	48
Figure 3.3: Contributions of different sectors to the economy .....	50
Figure 4.1: E-Governance as perceived by the Department of Public Service and administration (2001) .....	73
Figure 6.1: Demography of the students interviewed .....	103
Figure 6.2: The feedback form as seen on the NMBM website .....	106
Figure 6.3: Examples of newsletters from the NMBM, in the researcher's webmail inbox ...	115
Figure 6.4: Operating status of the 65 USA Telecenters .....	117
Figure 6.5: A web page in Xhosa found in the South African government online website ...	118
Figure 6.6: Extract showing the language translation feature on the NMBM website .....	122
Figure 6.7: The 2010 site on the NMBM website .....	127
Figure 6.8: NMBM website browsers by country .....	133



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND STUDY BACKGROUND</b> .....	11
1.1 Introduction .....	11
1.2 Research Problem and Questions .....	13
1.3 Study Rationale .....	15
1.4 Research Background .....	18
1.5 Conclusion.....	23
<b>CHAPTER TWO: DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY</b> .....	24
2.1 Introduction .....	24
2.2 Tenets of the Deliberative Democracy Discourse .....	24
2.3 Deliberative Democracy and Habermas’ Public Sphere .....	27
2.4 Critique of the Deliberative Democracy Discourse .....	31
2.5 Conclusion.....	32
<b>CHAPTER THREE: ONLINE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION</b> .....	33
3.1 Introduction .....	33
3.2 Exploring Online Participation.....	33
3.3 Requirements for Successful Online Consultation .....	40
3.4 Background to the NMB Municipality .....	46
3.4.1 Location of the Municipality .....	46
3.4.2 Demographics of the NMBM .....	47
3.4.3 Socio-Economic Conditions .....	48
3.4.4 Educational Facilities .....	50
3.4.5 Political Governance .....	51
3.5 Conclusion.....	57



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

<b>CHAPTER FOUR: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....</b>	<b>58</b>
4.1 Introduction .....	58
4.2 Jurgen Habermas' Public Sphere Concept.....	58
4.2.1 Contextualizing the Public Sphere .....	58
4.2.2 Threats to the Public Sphere and Deliberative Democracy .....	63
4.2.3 The Development of the Public Sphere .....	67
4.2.4 Critique of the Public Sphere Discourse.....	70
4.2.5 The Way Forward.....	71
4.3 The Participatory Communication for Development Concept.....	74
4.3.1 Development of the Concept .....	74
4.3.2 Critique of the Participation for Development Concept.....	82
4.4 Conclusion.....	85



<b>CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>86</b>
5.1 Introduction .....	86
5.2 The Case Study Approach.....	86
5.2.1 In-depth Semi-Structured Interviews .....	93
5.2.2 Document Analysis .....	98
5.3 Conclusion.....	101

<b>CHAPTER SIX: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>102</b>
6.1 Introduction .....	102
6.2 Demography of Respondents .....	102
6.3 The NMBM Website as a Public Sphere .....	103
6.3.1 Information Dissemination Versus Deliberation .....	103
6.3.2 Is Universal Access a Reality .....	108
6.3.3 Rational Debate over the Website.....	111
6.3.4 Is Rank an Issue in Online Communications? .....	113
6.4 Government's Commitment to Fostering E-governance .....	116

6.5 Language as a Barrier to Effective Communication.....	120
6.6 An Analysis of some Critical Features on the Website .....	123
6.7 Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation of the Online Platform .....	124
6.8 Developmental Stage of E-governance in the NMBM .....	128
6.8.1 Information .....	128
6.8.2 Consultation .....	130
6.8.3 Participation .....	131
6.9 An Analysis of the NMBM’s Website Hits .....	131
6.10 Conclusion.....	134



**CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**..... 135

7.1 Introduction .....	135
7.2 Main Conclusions .....	135
7.2.1 Interactivity of the Website.....	135
7.2.2 Internet Accessibility for Citizens.....	136
7.2.3 Management of the NMBM Website.....	138
7.3 Lessons Learnt and Recommendations.....	138
7.4 Conclusion.....	141

**REFERENCES**..... 143

Appendix 1: Interview Questions For the Webmaster .....	156
Appendix 2: Interview Questions For Communication Managers and Policy-Formulators. ...	158
Appendix 3: Interview Questions For the NMBM Citizens .....	160

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND STUDY BACKGROUND

## 1.1 Introduction

The concept of participatory communication has gained a lot of momentum since its inception in the early 1970s by scholars like Freire (1972). It stresses the importance of “cultural identity of local communities and of democratization and participation at all levels - international, national, local and individual” (Servaes, 1989: 75). In South Africa, the government has incorporated the tenets of this phenomenon through its consultations with citizens in public meetings - locally known as *imbizos* and more recently through online platforms such as the *Batho Pele Gateway* project (which is basically a website). This trend has resulted in concepts and practices such as e-deliberation and e-democracy. This research takes a close look at this electronic communication particularly at local municipal level, to determine the extent to which it is compatible with Habermas’ notion of the public sphere.

The concept of e-democracy directly falls under the broader practice of e-governance which entails the use of electronic means in the interaction between government and citizens (G2C), and government to businesses (G2B), as well as in internal government operations (G2G) to simplify and improve democratic, government and business aspects of governance (Backus, 2001). This study however pays particular attention towards government to citizen consultations (G2C).



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Worldwide, quite a number of experiments on e-democracy have been effected (e.g. during the mid-1980s in USA, and in the early-1990s in Europe). These programmes were meant to promote the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) “in order to improve initially the services of local authorities to citizens, and further, to facilitate citizens’ participation in public affairs (Docter and Dutton, 1998) as quoted by (Vatikiotis, 2005). In South Africa, local municipalities have been implementing the notion of participatory communication. It is however subject to debate whether the levels of participation these public institutions allow are empowering to citizens or are just superficial. This enquiry therefore uses the NMBM to examine the nature of electronic public participation and how the municipality’s website relates to incorporating citizen participation in local government in particular.



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Section 152 of the South African Constitution requires of a local authority to encourage the involvement of communities and community organizations in matters of local government (Financial and Fiscal Commission, 2006). Traditionally, a number of ways have been in use to accomplish this engagement. These include *imbizos* and the use of community radios for example. With the advent of the Internet and other forms of the new media, faster and more convenient communication platforms emerged.

Computers and the Internet provide more convenient platforms for citizens’ easy and quick access to government services and information (Arocena & Senker, 2003). This means that through these platforms, citizen participation in influencing local governmental policy and decision making processes (e-democracy) is also made easier. Unless this initiative is coupled

with strategies designed to encourage feedback and debates, one would assume that they will not be any different from the traditional top-down information dissemination approaches.

## 1.2 Research Problem and Questions

A close look at South Africa's government departments and other institutions will show that they have adopted the use of the Internet in their interactions with their various stakeholders. These interactions take place through the use of institutional websites as well as e-mail for example. The website has thus become a form of the public sphere in Habermas' terms. He posits that the public sphere is the place where individuals deliberate and try to influence each others' behaviour and attitudes by making public communication possible (Sinha, 1997).



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One of the major objectives of the use of websites by governments has been to improve citizen participation in the running of public affairs (NMBM IDP, 2008-2012). This implies that the websites are supposed to enhance deliberation and two-way symmetrical flow of information between the government and its citizens. Problems however arise when formulating and implementing these noble e-governance policies. This is clear if one looks at the list of African governments' initiatives in the e-governance discourse. Table 1.1 shows Backus' (2001) examples of African countries that have initiated e-governance strategies as well as their respective objectives:

COUNTRY	E-GOVERNANCE OBJECTIVES
South Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of names of ministers and members of parliament</li> <li>• Online constitution</li> <li>• Giving feedback to the government</li> </ul>
Uganda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing the citizens with information such as the members of parliament, the constitution and facts about the country</li> <li>• Encouraging voting</li> </ul>
Burkina Faso	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing information for the citizen</li> <li>• Online constitution, laws and government structure</li> </ul>

**Table 1.1: Some African governments' e-governance objectives.**

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From the table, it can be deduced that all the three countries give the provision of information as the common objective of their different e-governance initiatives. Other reasons include giving the names of members of parliament, showing government structures and encouraging citizens to vote. A critical look at all these reasons will reveal that there is an implicit unequal balance of power between the governments and their citizens. From the stipulated objectives given above, there is clearly no intent to encourage engagements and deliberations between the two parties. This situation is therefore contradictory to the notion of the public sphere as postulated by Habermas (1979) which shall be vastly discussed in Chapter Four.

It is however interesting to note that some branches of the South African government have emphasized the idea of participation in their communication policies. The NMBM's communication policy for example, aims "... to encourage a culture of community participation

in governance ...” (NMBM, 2001: 3). This study therefore critiques the NMBM’s website (which is the face of the municipality on the cyber space) particularly on its interactivity and flexibility focusing on the information dissemination versus two-way symmetrical communication. The intricacies of e-governance in the NMBM will therefore be examined guided by the following questions:

1. Is the NMBM’s website being utilized as a form of the public sphere to enhance deliberative democracy in local government as perceived by Habermas?
2. What does the literature on online participation say and what steps are being taken by the South African government to foster successful e-governance?
3. What lessons may be learned from other countries’ experiences and success stories in e-democracy?



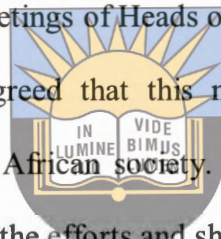
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### 1.3 Study Rationale

A significant percentage of the South African population is increasingly gaining access to the Internet and therefore tends to benefit from its various positive characteristics. Lesame (2005) postulates that the number of South African Internet users per host rose from 9 in 1994 to almost 38 in the year 2000. Clearly, access to the Internet is growing at a very fast rate. This development has had a lot of positive repercussions. Quick, convenient and relatively cheaper forms of communication are some of the fundamental benefits that one can easily pick up. It

therefore means that there is a lot interesting about this phenomenon that needs to be investigated.

The Internet is being used for a vast range of activities. These include sending and receiving of messages, the downloading and uploading of files, e-commerce and a whole lot more. More recently, there have been frantic efforts directed at incorporating the Internet into various governmental strategies for social development and better service delivery to make people's lives easier. Again, in many conferences and meetings of Heads of States like the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), it is agreed that this move is crucial in enhancing both economic and social development of the African society. This is where this kind of a study becomes handy through its examination of the efforts and shortfalls to this initiative by the South African government. The study will therefore help in determining the success or otherwise; of this initiative so that policy interventions may be effected if need be.

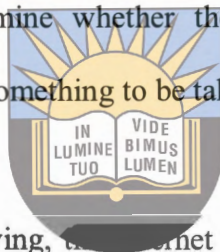


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The examination of case studies, the NMBM website, and documents on the policies and strategies formulated by the South African government will ascertain the amount of work that has been carried out on the ground. This will provide some critique on the premises on which these policies are based which therefore builds on the current knowledge base and inevitably filling-in existing knowledge gaps in the e-governance narrative.

In this study, development is not only seen in economic terms but also in terms of the social welfare of a country's citizenry. This study therefore goes on to explore the implications of e-governance on democratic processes. Citizens' participation in various governmental practices

such as policy formulation and implementation is therefore an intrinsic part of this debate. This is so because the relationship between citizens and local government authorities tends to be one based on proximity as the interests at stake for both parties are clearly entwined concerning issues such as public services, urban development, school planning, environmental concerns and local politics (Misuraca, 2005). It is at the local level that the impact of ICTs on the relationship between governments and citizens can be most effective, Misuraca argues. This study will therefore contribute more practical ideas to the e-government discourse in the South African local government context. It will determine whether the ICT for development hype and consequently e-democracy is a fantasy or something to be taken with great enthusiasm.



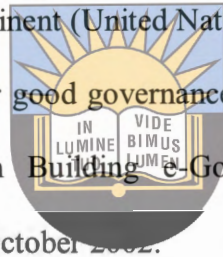
In the Information Age that we are surviving, the Internet plays a central role in almost every aspect of business transactions, political activities and social life. Through its examination of G2C interactions at a local governmental level, it is anticipated that this study will be of great importance to the ICT policy makers in any field, the general populace, and certainly governments of Southern Africa. It is anticipated that this study will come up with ICT related proposals designed to enhance deliberative discourses and help tackle recurrent problems of poor communication and service delivery in the South African public service sector.

Although a lot of local municipalities in South Africa have their own websites, the NMBM's was selected. This was mainly because the municipality's communication policy clearly identified citizen participation as its core element as shown in the introduction above. The website was also being updated more frequently and it was running much faster than the others visited during the

preliminary stages of the investigation. Although the Western Cape's case could have been easily taken as the case study, distance comparison favored the NMBM.

## 1.4 Research Background

In the quest to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the NEPAD Heads of States made a commitment to stimulate the use of ICTs as a driving force to advance social and economic development of the African continent (United Nations, 2000). This subsequently led to the formation of the e-Africa initiative for good governance. The initiative was launched at the "e-Africa First Regional Workshop on Building e-Governance Capacity in Africa" in Johannesburg from the 28<sup>th</sup> to the 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2002.



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The ICT for development initiative basically stresses the developmental role and crosscutting impact that ICTs can have on all facets of society. ICTs, it is argued, have the potential to improve the performance of public institutions and make them more transparent and responsive, facilitate strategic connections in government by creating highly networked administrations in which users can access information and services via portals or 'one-stop-shops'; and empower civil-society organizations (CSOs) and citizens by making knowledge and other resources more directly accessible (Arocena and Senker, 2003).

A typical example of the successful use of ICTs for civil participation in governance is the Minnesota case in America. "E-Democracy in Minnesota allows residents to watch legislative debates on television or the Web, read proposed amendments online, and send comments directly

to their lawmakers as the debate unfolds” (Meskell, 2007: 2). More critical research however needs to be done to ascertain the extent to which these systems are empowering to the citizenry.

While the Minnesota case may sound a perfect condition for someone living in a city from a highly developed country, it may turn out to be completely alien for a resident of Ntselamanzi – a not so affluent residential location of Nkonkobe Municipality, Alice in South Africa. These dynamics will therefore be used to inform the process of coming up with a blueprint for e-governance initiatives that take these differences into consideration.



Fourteen years into the democratic political dispensation, the South African media headlines are still frequented by protest marches (in many cases violent) on poor performance of many public institutions and lack of public consultations in governmental decision-making. This situation is worrying considering that South Africa is ranked “fifth in an innovative, comprehensive new ranking of governance quality in sub-Saharan Africa” (SAinfo reporter, 2007). It is however encouraging to note that the South African government has been facilitating strategies designed to transform public institutions thereby enhancing better service delivery. This transformation has taken various forms, but of concern here is the ICT for good governance discourse that puts emphasis on e-participation and ultimately e-democracy.

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In general, the electronic democracy discourse is characterized by two major promises: the citizen’s free access to public information and open discursive deliberation on the electronic Net (Tsagarousianou, 1999) in Häyhtiö and Keskinen (2005). The idea of Developmental Local Government which is “local government committed to working with citizens and groups within

the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives” (NMBM Communication Policy, 2001: 2) also comes into focus. This compels one to critically reflect on the key themes identified by the government in the improvement of public service delivery in South Africa and where ICT’s may play a role. The themes centre on access, content, citizen service, and economic and social development. This study therefore unravels the South African government’s success in striking a balance between the potential of these new media on one side, and needs, expectations and capabilities of their potential users on the other side.



The 2000 Millennium Development Summit resulted in the drafting of the Millennium Declaration that puts a lot of challenges on member states. One of the challenges is that the member states need to adhere to the making “available the benefits of new technologies, specifically information and communications” (Department of Communications, 2006: 1).

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In line with the MDGs, there has been numerous efforts implemented or which are in the process of being implemented by the state and individual government departments. The efforts include, among others, several large information systems, including the National Population Register, a deed register, the National Transport Information System (NATIS) that is now called eNATIS, systems to manage Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF), welfare grants, subsidies as well as systems to manage tax collection and liabilities that have been in place for more than 10-15 years (Centre for Public Service Innovation (CPSI) and the LINK Centre, 2005). Quite recently, there has been a move to introduce Smart Cards by the National Department of Home Affairs although

this has been in the pipeline since the year 2005. This study will however emphasise on the deliberative nature of e-governance and its contribution to democracy.

While the democratization situation is promising at the national level, the picture has not been clearly painted at municipal level. Because of the history of fragmentation perpetuated by the apartheid regime and the recent creation of the current 284 municipalities, the use of ICTs varies substantially between these municipalities (Centre for Public Service Innovation (CPSI) and the LINK Centre, 2005). In general, “it would be the larger urban metro’s that incorporated major parts of areas that would have in place systems to manage payments, rates and taxes, registrations, as well as manage their own internal operations” (Gillwald and Esselaar, 2004: 23).

New municipalities and those that exist in marginal areas are likely to have very few systems in place to assist the respective municipalities to engage in the provision of e-services.



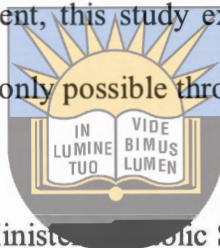
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Previous research studies reveal that there are major ICT deficits in many marginalized local municipalities including the lack of basic ICT facilities like a stand-alone computer. In addition and quite expectedly, many of these local authorities did not see ICTs as crucial when they were confronting more basic need challenges like housing, clean water, sanitation, roads, and electricity. To this end, the pessimistic camp that thinks that ICTs by themselves will not lead to development unless accompanied by social changes will therefore be explored.

The South African *Government Communication and Information Systems* (GCIS) that was established in 1998, started the whole process of encouraging government departments to institute an online presence in the form of a website as far back as the year 2000 (Pahad, 2006).

It is encouraging to note that within eight years, all the government departments have their own respective websites. This development however, needs to be spread across the whole spectrum of the government which includes local municipalities and their interactions with citizens.

The 2007 Acting Mayor of Nkonkobe local municipality for example, revealed that they are still engaging with the community through “Community Outreach and Imbizos...on issues of service delivery and development... to ensure sustainable service delivery” (Ncume, 2007: 2). While this is a plausible practice in citizen engagement, this study explores how this situation has been improved by employing e-services that are only possible through the use of Internet.



When it comes to formal legislation, the Minister of Public Service and Administration (through the Public Service Act) has the mandate of determining policy and strategy on e-government and the use of ICTs within the South African government (Trusler, 2003). To this effect, the department released an e-government framework in the year 2001. According to the framework, each government department was required, as part of their strategic planning processes, to develop an information management plan and strategy. In addition, the policy framework suggested the creation of a Gateway portal where all government services could be found in a way where the services are according to the needs of citizens and not the other way round. This saw the launching of the *Batho-Pele Gateway Portal* where anyone with access to the Internet can get information on almost anything to do with governance in South Africa.

At the departmental level, the State Information Technology Agency (SITA) is responsible for establishing and maintaining all government websites. SITA is the IT service agency for the

South African government. Its stated aim is to “develop the powerful Internet platform” (Blom & Willers 2001: 13). From this discussion, it is clear that the national government is committed to implementing e-governance principles. It is now the task of this research to ascertain the situation at local government level while drawing lessons in case studies from both developed and developing countries’ experiences.

## 1.5 Conclusion

This introductory chapter has managed to outline the background and context of the whole study. It has been shown that the study aims to utilize known models of participatory communication to determine the contribution of e-governance to deliberative democracy in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality. It was also shown that carrying out such a study was important to determine how effectively or otherwise; e-governance policies were being implemented in the area under scrutiny. In doing this, criticism on the premises of e-governance and its effectiveness will be done thus helping to fill-in knowledge gaps and refining e-democracy theory.



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# CHAPTER TWO: DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to review literature on deliberative democracy. It touches on the key premises of the concept, tries to converge it with Habermas' public sphere concept and ends by offering some of the criticisms of the deliberative democracy discourse.



## 2.2 Tenets of the Deliberative Democracy Discourse

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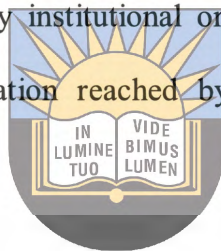
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Promoters of democracy have various notions about this political idea. These range from participatory democracy, social democracy, liberal democracy and a lot more (Farrelly, 2004). Farrelly provides a lot of insight on the deliberative democracy proponents. As a method of changing the attitudes and intentions of citizens, he argues that this group of democrats calls for the reflection of citizens as “reasonable equals” as a precondition for the “legitimate exercise of authority.” It is for this reason that this concept has been linked and combined with the tenets of the public sphere as propounded by Habermas.

Deliberative democrats argue that when individuals participate in deliberative democratic processes they are likely to become more tolerant of differences, more attuned to reciprocity, better able to engage in moral discourse and judgment, and more prone to examine their own

preferences (Warren, 1993). These democratic dispositions will consequently strengthen the democratic polity within the participant's societies. This situation is even easier to envisage when these deliberations are done over the Internet due to the avoidance of rank as well as the privacy that comes with it.

Warren (1993) postulates that Habermas avoids associating democracy with some specific group of institutional mechanisms such as the casting of votes, power separation or representation. Instead, he understands democracy as any institutional order whose acceptance and survival greatly depends on collective will-formation reached by way of deliberation. Democracy therefore



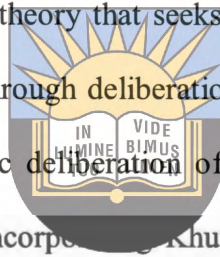
is a question of finding arrangements which can ground the basic presupposition that the basic institutions of the society and the basic political decisions would meet with the unforced agreement of all those involved, if they could participate, as free and equal, in discursive will-formation

(Habermas, 1979: 186).

Simply put, Habermas' argument is that democracy is the kind of polity that opts for agreements that are reached by way of open and free discussions. He despises coercive authority and the influences of the markets in determining the way of politics.

The Internet and websites in particular, is in a better position to enhance the kind of polity that Habermas calls for. Websites are less prone to the influences of the markets as might be the case with television, radio and the newspapers. Advertisers and sponsors are known to have the capacity to influence strategic decisions within media houses hence creating unequal power relationships.

Cohen (1997: 23) agrees with Warren (1993) on the deliberative democracy theory adding that “the theory represents a body of political theory that seeks to develop a substantive version of democracy based on public justification through deliberation.” It further follows that legitimate lawmaking can only arise from the public deliberation of the citizenry. If the South African government embarks on the process of incorporating the Khutsong residents into the North West Province for example; full consultations with, and consent of citizens is required rather than a minister taking unilateral decisions and imposing them onto the people. Lack thereof may result in violent demonstrations as widely reported in the South African media.



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One is however left with the difficult task of determining whether online deliberations will lead to consensus decision-making. Will all the parties in the discussions ever agree on any specific decision? The answer may recline in the casting of votes as the solution. This however, has its own weaknesses for it fails to take into consideration some arguments that may hold water simply because they are only shared by the minority.

## 2.3 Deliberative Democracy and Habermas' Public sphere

The deliberative democratic system came as a result of the presence of people who objected to traditional liberalism and a conventional pluralist picture of democracy as a conflict of pre-politically formed individual and group interests (Gutmann and Thompson, 1996). The two authors argue that a deliberative approach to democracy is superior to the other approaches that either value procedures over outcomes or constrain outcomes based on non-procedural considerations. Due to its encouragement of engagement and the inclusion of all the voices concerned, deliberative democracy mixes well with the public sphere concept.



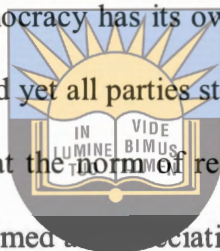
Adopting a deliberative approach within a municipality would therefore facilitate the citizens' understanding of issues that they face in their daily lives. Consequently, the people will understand each others' viewpoints even if they do not seem to agree. Ultimately whatever will be taken as a decision will easily get the support of the people due to the democratic nature of the discourse leading to the decision (Habermas, 1997).

Gutmann and Thompson (1996) also outline norms of reciprocity, publicity, and accountability as governing democratic procedures. Reciprocity means that citizens try to offer reasons that other similarly motivated citizens can accept even though they recognize that they share only some of one another's values. A public position fails to respect reciprocity if it imposes a requirement on other citizens. Citizens should therefore not be compelled to adopt others' sectarian way of life as a condition of gaining access to the moral understanding that is essential for judging the validity of one's moral claims (Farrelly, 2004).

It suffices to argue that the issue of accountability for example, is relatively easier to deal with in online communications. This is because of the sophistication of technologies associated with computers and the Internet. This technology can easily keep records and track senders and receivers of messages for future references for example. The data may also be stored in locations secured by passwords thus enhancing privacy.

Just like any other polity, deliberative democracy has its own challenges. There could be found cases where no shared reasons are identified yet all parties stand on genuinely moral positions. In such cases, Habermas (1997) proposes that the norm of reciprocity prescribes accommodation based on mutual respect. This respect is aimed at recognizing the fact that every citizen has the competency to positively contribute to deliberations on matters that affect them. Enumerations of citizen competencies as given by Barber (2007) quoted in Macedo (1999) include: commonality, deliberation, inclusiveness, provisionality, listening, learning, lateral communication, imagination, and empowerment. All these factors were considered in the ascertainment of whether or not Internet was being effectively used to contribute to democracy in local municipalities particularly in the Nelson Mandela Bay region.

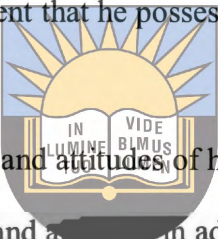
Warren (1993) argues that since discourse is an issue of creating understandings rather than harmonizing events and expressing feelings, we take its route only when there is a disturbance to our everyday understanding. On the other hand, Habermas (1997) does not see it as indispensable that democratic institutions should conduct all their affairs through discourse. He instead argues that the institutions should be structured so that discourse can emerge when breaks



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of shared understanding require some kind of resolution. Discourse therefore prefers that it is often more desirable to resolve conflicts through talk rather than coercion, markets, traditional authority or blind consensus (Kellner, 2000). In this regard, the deliberative democracy theory goes hand in glove with Habermas' Public Sphere concept as already discussed.

For a citizenry to play a significant role in deliberative democracy, they need to possess what Habermas termed 'communicative power.' As outlined by Andren (1993) in Splichal (2002), a person has communicative power to the extent that he possesses the following characteristics:

- 
- (i) has consciously developed opinions and attitudes of his own
- (ii) knows how to express his opinions and attitudes in adequate ways
- (iii) has access to media where he can express his opinions and attitudes which he can use to reach a large and/or influential audience or a particular audience which he wants to influence, and
- (iv) will, in fact, influence the opinions, attitudes or behaviour of other citizens in accordance with his interests.

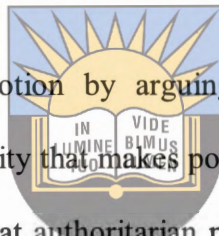
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This research therefore sought to establish whether the citizens of the NMBM had this communicative power particularly in relation to the use of the Internet as a means of expressing themselves. This examination proceeded to analyze whether the same citizens had managed to make use of the Internet to influence other citizens in issues that affect them on a daily basis. This was done considering that:

when individuals express their needs and interests, they may undergo transformations through discursive processes of challenge and justification that can simultaneously produce consensus and increase the independence of individuals as they come to better understand their own needs, interests and desires

(Baiocchi, 2003: 23).

Habermas (1997) also buttresses this notion by arguing that corresponding to the ideal communication community is an ego-identity that makes possible self-realization on the basis of self-directed action. It is therefore clear that authoritarian means of making decisions is not an accepted practice within the contemporary democratic societies.

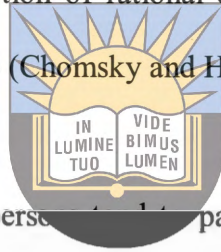


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Chitnis (2005) asserts that the very success of the participatory experiment necessarily begs the question of its transportability to other places. As a result of this, he raises two issues for deliberative democratic theory which he argues should be more fundamental to its considerations. First is the importance of institutional capacity and autonomy to carry out deliberative democratic projects. Secondly, is the importance of the type of driving politics behind real-world deliberative democratic experiments. These concerns have therefore necessitated the examination of the municipality's capacity of sustaining public participation in deliberative consultations as well as the inevitable analysis of the kind of governance style or polity that those in power tend to follow.

## 2.4 Critique of the Deliberative Democracy Discourse

One of the main concerns of the critics of deliberative democracy is that spheres of deliberations are likely to reproduce the kinds of inequalities of society at large. One may easily assume that the unequal distribution of wealth will ensure that those with more resources will tend to benefit more than those with less. Critics argue that we could extend criticisms of the public sphere to deliberative democracy-type proposals to anticipate a particularly sad criticism that at best, deliberative democracy may create the fiction of rational deliberation that in fact justifies an elitist and male-centered kind of citizenship (Chomsky and Herman, 2002).



It is therefore not surprising that poorer persons do not participate more in these deliberative settings than better-off citizens. According to Chomsky and Herman (2002), this is so because there is some notion of 'need' which is a primary motivator for participation at all in these problem-solving settings. A common sense expectation would be that there would be needier persons in these settings than the city as a whole (Baiocchi, 1999). There is therefore a dilemma when it comes to the use of the Internet in these deliberative settings. One may argue that in the Information Era, the poor have less communicative power because they would not afford Internet connections or they might be technologically illiterate for example. Governments therefore need to take these factors into consideration when implementing e-governance strategies.

The superficial participation of the poor and less educated in the deliberative processes has been recorded by a number of researchers. The costly nature of engaging in online deliberations for example, will eliminate these groups of people from contributing to the discussions. This

constraint is even clear when one looks at how costly it is to subscribe to the Internet let alone buying a standalone computer. Regardless of all these constraints, public communication and e-deliberations in particular, have been underway hence the need for examining the phenomenon.

## 2.5 Conclusion

The chapter has reviewed literature on the deliberative democracy discourse. It has been outlined that this concept calls for the equal representation of views for the political decision-making process. In so doing, the concept therefore matches well with Habermas' public sphere concept in public participatory communication. Nevertheless, criticisms leveled against deliberative democracy have revealed that it may repeat the same male-dominated elitist societies. This may become even more pronounced when one considers the use of the Internet which is quite expensive and still out of reach for many. Through focused and liberative government and civil society interventions, these criticisms may however be diluted.



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# CHAPTER THREE: ONLINE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

## 3.1 Introduction

For one to fully understand e-governance, some literature on administrative issues associated with the phenomenon need to be discussed. This chapter therefore tries to outline the cornerstones of a successful online public participation model. It concludes by a discussion on the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality's background which may help to explain the state of affairs that will be identified during data collection.

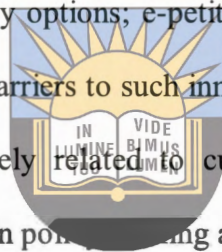


## 3.2 Exploring Online Participation

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Also known as e-participation, online participation is about electronic communication that gives voices to citizens. A number of apparatus are available for government's intent on collecting citizens' views and suggestions on issues proposed for online consultation. These include government consultation portals or websites (e.g. the South African *Batho Pele Gateway*); email lists; online discussion forums; online mediation systems to support deliberation; ICT support in conducting traditional "face-to-face" consultations. There are quite a number of challenges associated with these apparatus as discussed before. However, such challenges can be reduced by serious efforts to enable wider access (through public kiosks, cyber-cafes and community centers, as well as via digital TV and other platforms) and an adequate investment in promoting and supporting online consultations by governments and their partners from civil society (Coleman, 2006).

Macintosh (2004) posits that only a very few members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries have started to experiment with online tools and discussion formats which leave citizens wide liberty in proposing opportunities for participation, setting the agenda for discussion, submitting their own proposals and shaping the final outcomes. Macintosh claims that among the options for online public participation currently being explored in some OECD member countries are the use of electronic discussion groups for the deliberation and development of policy options; e-petitions (to government or parliament); and online referenda. While many of the barriers to such innovative forms of online engagement may be technical, others are more closely related to cultural resistance to new forms of partnership with citizens and civil society in policy-making and constitutional factors shaping the traditional policy process within representative democracies.



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On the basis of OECD member countries' experience to date, five main challenges for the future of online engagement of citizens in policy-making have been identified. They will now be briefly discussed.

### **1. Scale**

From a citizen's perspective, there is the worry on how technology enables an individual's voice to be heard and not be lost in the mass debate. There is therefore a need for policy measures and technologies to promote and maintain virtual public spaces that enable an individual's voice to develop into a community or public voice. From a government perspective however, there is the challenge of how to pay attention, and respond appropriately to each individual contribution.

Fostering online communities and developing ICT tools to support such communities could enable a more collective approach (Coleman, 2006).

## **2. Capacity**

According to Macintosh (2006), the second challenge is how to provide citizens with greater information on public issues and to enhance their capacity for listening to, and engaging in, argument and counter argument. At the same time, greater efforts are needed to raise awareness and capacity among government officials with regard to the opportunities and limits of new channels for citizen engagement in policy-making offered by ICTs. Accessible and understandable information and the opportunity to engage in debate, enabled by such tools as next generation mediated discussion forums, are preconditions (Coleman, 2006). Closely connected issues are those of bridging the digital divide and the involvement of traditionally disenfranchised groups in policy-making (e.g. those subject to social exclusion and the youth). The challenge is to develop tools for online engagement that provide citizens with an opportunity both to participate in, and to understand, collective decision-making and to develop the skills for active citizenship.

## **3. Coherence**

Governments need to take a holistic assessment of the policy-making cycle and design technology to support the processes of informing, consulting, participating, analyzing, providing feedback and evaluating. Inputs received at each stage in the policy-making cycle must be made available appropriately at the other stages of the process. This will lead to better quality policies that are more likely to be successfully implemented and better informed citizens. Consideration

should be given to addressing if, and to what extent, knowledge management techniques could support the policy-making cycle (Backus, 2001).

#### **4. Evaluation**

As governments increasingly support the development of ICTs to enable citizen engagement on policy-related matters, there is a corresponding need to know whether online engagement meets both citizens' and governments' objectives. Evaluation tools to assess what value-added online engagement has, or has not, brought to policy-making must be developed. Häyhtiö and Keskinen (2005) posit that benefits and impacts of applying technology in opening up the policy process to wider public input have yet to be evaluated and articulated.



#### **5. Commitment**

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Engaging citizens online raises legitimate expectations that public input will be used to inform policy-making. Governments therefore need to adapt their structures and processes to ensure that the results of online consultations are analyzed, disseminated and used (Häyhtiö and Keskinen, 2005). This commitment must be communicated widely, demonstrated in practice and validated regularly (e.g. via annual reports, audits, parliamentary reviews).

In line with the view that responsible citizens are capable of discussing and generating policy options independently and can play a positive role in decision-making, the OECD report on Citizens as Partners (2001: 97) suggests that while final decisions must still rest with governments, importance should be attached to the “equal standing for citizens in setting the agenda, proposing policy options and shaping the policy dialogue.” Active participation is

regarded by the OECD (2001: 12) as “a relation based on partnership with government, in which citizens actively engage in defining the process and content of policy-making.”

The report however goes on to warn that the use of technology could diminish the sense of face-to-face confrontation and increase the dangers of elite manipulation. Held (1996) distinguishes nine different models of democracy. His participatory model reflects the need to engage both citizens and civil society organizations (CSOs) in the policy process. However, in order to engage citizens in policy-making, he recognizes the need for informed and active citizens. At the same time, Fishkin (1995) argues the need for “mass” deliberation by citizens instead of “elite” deliberation by elected representatives. Instant reactions to telephone surveys and television call-ins do not allow time to think through issues and weigh the competing arguments, Fishkin argues.

A major part of the problem of democratic reform is how to promote mass deliberation – how to bring people into the process under circumstances where they can be engaged to think seriously and fully about public issues.

Some OECD member countries have developed guidelines for online consultations, for example, Canada and the Netherlands (Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations of the Netherlands, 1998). However, it is not obvious from these guidelines how the contributions from the citizens will be integrated into the government process of policy-making. It is unclear what, if any, mechanisms are in place to ensure that contributions are incorporated appropriately and that such contributions actually have an effect on the policy content. Indeed many reports on e-democracy (for example, Coleman and Gøtze, 2001) report on experiments at national and local level of government. However the majority of these reports only focus on specific aspects of engagement

in the policy-making process, that is, the “front-end” aspects where information is disseminated and where comments are sought. The corresponding “back-end” processes, that is, where the input from citizens has to be analyzed, integrated into policy and feedback provided to those who contributed, have less weight placed on them or are not discussed at all.

One example of a parliament providing extensive information via the Web is the Scottish Parliament’s website. This site is at [www.scottish.parliament.uk](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk) (consulted February, 2002). It publishes the Official Report of the Parliament’s meetings in the Chamber by 7 a.m. on the following day, and Committee Reports as soon as possible and generally within three days of the meeting. In addition, and as a further step towards openness, committee agendas and papers are published in advance where possible. The site also shows the email addresses of all members of parliament, their biographies and links to personal web pages, alongside phone and fax numbers and correspondence addresses. Email addresses for clerks to committees and for offices within the parliament are also published. A webcasting service broadcasts Chamber and Committee meetings live across the web so that organizations and individuals can listen and watch items of particular importance to them. The service also includes access to the audiovisual archive of webcasts, and relevant papers for the committee meetings.



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According to Macintosh (2004), there are seven characteristics that determine the degree of accessibility to any kind of information that the government would want its citizens to read. They are:

**Recognisability and localisability:** the public must know what information is available from which government body, and how and where this can be located.

**Availability:** the information must be stored in a standard digital form and be accessible through an electronic medium or data carrier.

**Manageability:** the public must not drown in the quantity or complexity of the information but instead be able to find their own way through the system, if necessary using search systems provided by the government.



**Affordability:** the price of the information should not create any barriers, this being dependent on the importance of the information for society at large.

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**Reliability:** the public must be able to rely on the correctness, completeness and authenticity of the information.

**Clarity:** the information must be as clear as possible in terms of content, context and presentation.

**Special needs:** the information should preferably also be accessible to the blind, the visually handicapped and people with other handicaps.

The government's commitment to all of these requirements will enhance the effectiveness of an online public participation platform. Once reliability and affordability is compromised, for example, the whole process will not be any different from the top-down approaches that deliberative democracy seeks to differentiate itself from.

### 3.3 Requirements for Successful Online Consultation

There are a number of basic requirements needed for the successful implementation of an online public participation forum. Riley (2003) has identified ten factors that need to be carefully considered when one needs to come up with a vibrant strategy in this regard. Successful online consultation is as a result of a good e-governance strategy that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in: *What is E-Governance?* (2005), defines as:



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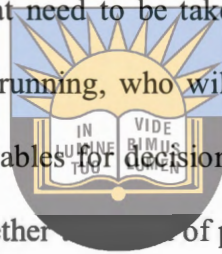
The public sector's use of information and communication technologies with the aim of improving information and service delivery, encouraging citizen participation in the decision-making process and making government more accountable, transparent and effective

(Onyancha, 2007: 2).

Riley's requirements are now discussed.

## **1. Start Planning Early**

As is the norm with a vast range of programmes, planning is the first stage that needs to be done before anything else can be started. According to Riley (2003), planning an online consultation exercise ought to be done meticulously in the beginning of the project. The first thing in this stage is to define what information requirements the target group requires. This information could be in terms of political talk, health issues, voting and many other topics. The kind of format of this information also needs to be considered depending on the target group's characteristics. Other critical decisions that need to be taken at this stage include deciding on how long the online consultation will be running, who will be responsible for it and how the input received will feed into existing timetables for decision-making. Data collection interviews of this study were striving to establish whether or not any form of planning was taking place within the case study.



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## **2. Demonstration of Commitment**

After an online programme for public participation has been designed and implemented, there is need for the authorities to demonstrate a big level of commitment to it. Onyancha (2007) ascertains that this leadership commitment should be visible at the highest level and must be clearly communicated from the outset. An explanation of the purpose of the consultation (e.g. scoping new policy issues, developing draft legislation, evaluating policy implementation) is also a crucial component of the planning so that a clear direction is obtained. Lastly, there is the need for developing a strategy on where the results will be published and how they will be used. All

these will ensure that a proper direction will be followed and assessments will be done to establish the success or failure of the programme.

### **3. Guarantee Personal Data Protection**

Online platforms for any activity have come up with some unwanted repercussions. One of these is the infiltration of private information by sales agents and sometimes even thieves and fraudsters. In view of this, Riley (2003) argues that guarantees for the protection of personal information must be provided for participants in online consultations. The implications for personal information protection will vary with the form of data collection chosen (e.g. anonymous submissions, online registration or password access for restricted groups). This consideration is very important because some people would prefer to remain anonymous when contributing something over the Internet. At the same time, the use of passwords and registration systems will also ensure that citizens use online platforms responsibly for any correspondence may be tracked back to them if need be.



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### **4. Tailoring Online Approaches to Fit Target Groups**

One would assume that any online public participation forum would require the identification of participants whose opinions are being sought such as the general public, experts, youth and other targeted audiences. After this identification process, there is the need to adapt the online consultation to the intended audience's capacities and expectations for example, language and terminology (Lester, 2002). In addition, the provision of additional support is also very critical. This includes catering for participants with special needs such as physical disabilities and social exclusion to participate (Riley, 2003).

## 5. Integrate Online Consultation with Traditional Methods

Any online public participation strategy needs to consider the use of traditional methods in conjunction with online consultations. (Häyhtiö and Keskinen, 2005) assert that one such system might be made to use public roundtables plus dedicated websites to achieve this. An approach based on such multiple channels is likely to be more successful in reaching and engaging citizens than one that relies on a single medium (Riley, 2003). It is therefore anticipated that regardless of the sophistication of the equipment that communication practitioners in the NMBM may possess, they are likely not to abandon traditional communication platforms like *imbizos* and the *Masithethisane* programme in favour of online means. The literature on the background to the NMBM has also indicated that the municipalities are not that well-off when it comes to technology and social welfare in general. One would therefore expect that traditional means of interacting with them are still dominant within this jurisdiction.



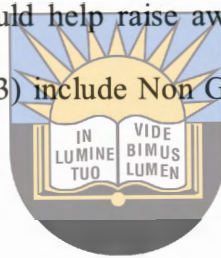
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## 6. Testing and Adaptation of Tools

Before launching an online consultation exercise, (Häyhtiö and Keskinen, 2005) argue that there is need to ensure that the tools chosen (e.g. software and questionnaires) have undergone pilot testing. These tools ought to be adapted on the basis of feedback from participants. This kind of feedback allows the communication practitioners to identify promising information and communication technologies (ICTs) for future consultations such as mobile phone messaging for example.

## 7. Promoting Online Consultation

Just like any other communication strategy a practitioner may want to launch, the establishment of an online communication platform requires that the responsible organization invests adequate effort and resources to ensure that potential participants are aware of it. Participants also need to be informed on where and how exactly they may take part. These awareness campaigns may come in the form of press conferences, advertising, links to websites, emails and many other strategies. A lot of research therefore needs to be conducted so that the municipal authorities are able to identify external partners who could help raise awareness and facilitate participation. Possible partners, according to Riley (2003) include Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) as well as business associations.



## 8. Analyze the Results

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Communication practitioners must be able to ensure that sufficient time, resources and expertise are available to provide thorough analysis of the input received in the course of the online consultation. The use of closed or multiple choice questions will allow for automatic processing, while free text replies will require a far greater investment in human resources (Riley, 2003). Such considerations should be taken into account from the outset when designing the online consultation.

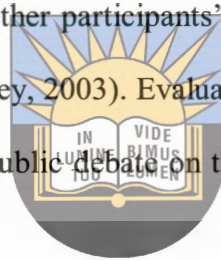
## 9. Provide feedback

Results of the online consultation need to be published as soon as possible so that participants are informed of the next steps in the policy-making process. More importantly, Riley argues that participants need to be informed of how the results were used in reaching decisions. It does no

good making people participate but keep them in the darkness when it comes to how their input was incorporated into the decision making process. Failure to provide feedback may result in apathetic citizens who feel helpless in the situations they find themselves in.

#### **10. Evaluate the consultation process and its impacts**

Process evaluation aims to identify the main problems encountered, whether the consultation reached the target group and the level of participant satisfaction. Evaluating the impact of consultation requires an estimation of whether participants' input had an identifiable impact on the content of the final policy decision (Riley, 2003). Evaluation results should be communicated widely and may, in turn, prompt fruitful public debate on the benefits and drawbacks of online consultation.



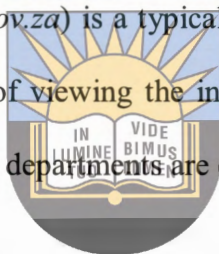
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The successful engagement of citizens by governments rests on the latter's recognition of access to information as a basic precondition, consultation as central to policy-making and public participation as a relationship based on partnership (Macintosh, 2004). The new tools offered by ICTs can to offer assistance in each of these domains.

After outlining the above administrative requirements, it however suffices to argue that the process of citizen engagement is hardly as clear-cut as implied above. For those citizens seeking information online for example, the distinction between access and accessibility might be a dilemma. Even when citizens do have access to ICTs, searching for a specific piece of government information online is hardly a straightforward exercise. Designing better public information online must therefore start from the perspective of the end-users of government

information and requires an assessment of their needs, capacity to find, digest and use relevant information (Fishkin (1995).

The accessibility of online information needs to be enhanced. This can be achieved by providing online information in terms of specific life events or policy issues; search engines; software for style checking and improving the intelligibility of government texts; multilingual translations of official documents; provision of online glossaries etc (Backus, 2001). The South African National government's website ([www.sa.gov.za](http://www.sa.gov.za)) is a typical example of such a website. All the documents and websites have the option of viewing the information in more than one official language and the links to other government departments are easy to find.



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### 3.4 Background to the NMBM Municipality

#### 3.4.1 Location of the Municipality

The area under investigation is located in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa in a coastal town called Port Elizabeth. The municipality covers an area of 1 950km<sup>2</sup> (NMBM IDP, 2008 – 2012). Below are three maps adapted from the municipality's tourism website (<http://www.nmbt.co.za/maps/maps.asp>). In Figure 3.1, the map to the left illustrates the location of South Africa on the African continent while the other map shows Port Elizabeth as a town as well as zooming into the NMBM to show its location within the coastal town.

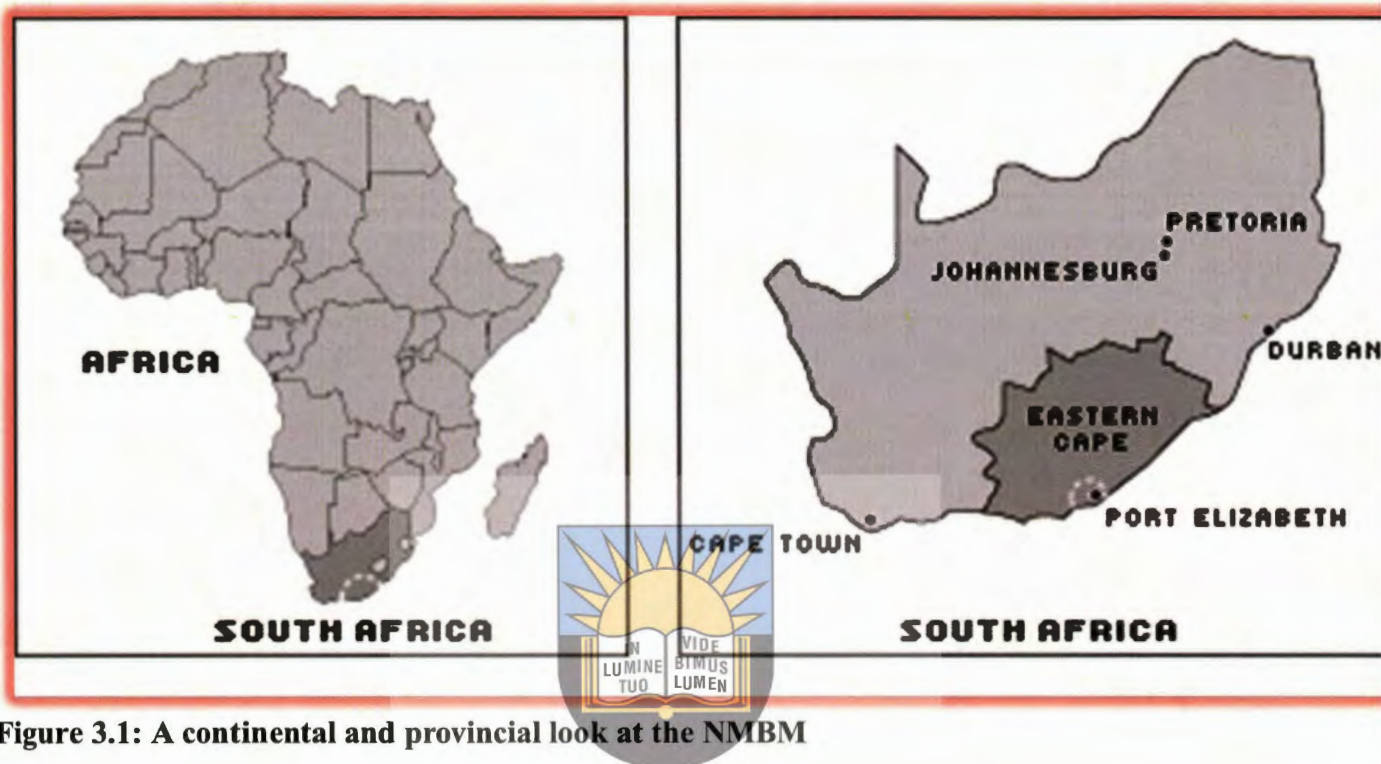


Figure 3.1: A continental and provincial look at the NMBM

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Figure 3.2 takes an even closer look of the NMBM and other surrounding areas revealing the major roads and coastal places.

### 3.4.2 Demographics of the NMBM

Nelson Mandela Bay has a population of 1, 5 million making it South Africa's 5<sup>th</sup> largest city in terms of population and the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest in terms of area ([www.mandelametro.gov.za](http://www.mandelametro.gov.za)). There are three predominantly spoken languages which are English, Afrikaans and Xhosa. On the other hand, the age and gender distribution in Nelson Mandela Bay reflects a very youthful population, with 55% of residents falling in the age group below 30 years, with a male/female ratio of 48:52.



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Figure 3.2: A closer look at the NMBM

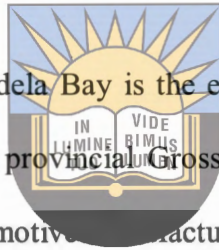
### 3.4.3 Socio-Economic Conditions

Review of literature including electronic documents and the municipal website reveals that the history of apartheid that contributed to distorted development in the city is manifested in highly skewed distribution of income and wealth. Unemployment is considerably high. The unemployment rate within the economically active population of the community is approximately 38% (NMBM IDP, 2008-2012). Although the unemployment rate in the Nelson Mandela Bay has shown a steady decline since 1994, it remains higher than the national average

for South Africa which was standing at 23, 5% during the First Quarter of 2009 ([www.statssa.gov.za](http://www.statssa.gov.za)). Poverty is therefore rampant in the municipality.

It is however encouraging to note that the municipality (through the Assistance to the Poor Scheme) continues to provide relief to poor households. It has increased these households' access to water from 6 Kl to 8 Kl of water and from 50 kWh of electricity to 75 kWh of electricity per month since the year 2007.

On a more positive note, the Nelson Mandela Bay is the economic powerhouse of the Eastern Cape Province. It contributes 44% to the provincial Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (NMBM IDP, 2008-2012). It lies at the core of automotive manufacturing in South Africa, which accounts for 50% of local manufacturing.



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The Nelson Mandela Bay area is the location of the largest single infrastructure development project in South Africa. It houses the Coega Industrial Development Zone (IDZ), and the construction of the deepwater port of Ngqura, both of which have given a major boost to the economic viability of the region. Figure 3.3, adapted from the municipality's IDP (2008-2012) shows the contributions made by the main sectors of the local economy. The communication sector, combined with transport and storage, accounts for only 13% of the total economy indicating that the communication industry may not be that well developed as compared to the dominant manufacturing which accounts for 33% of the total

economy.

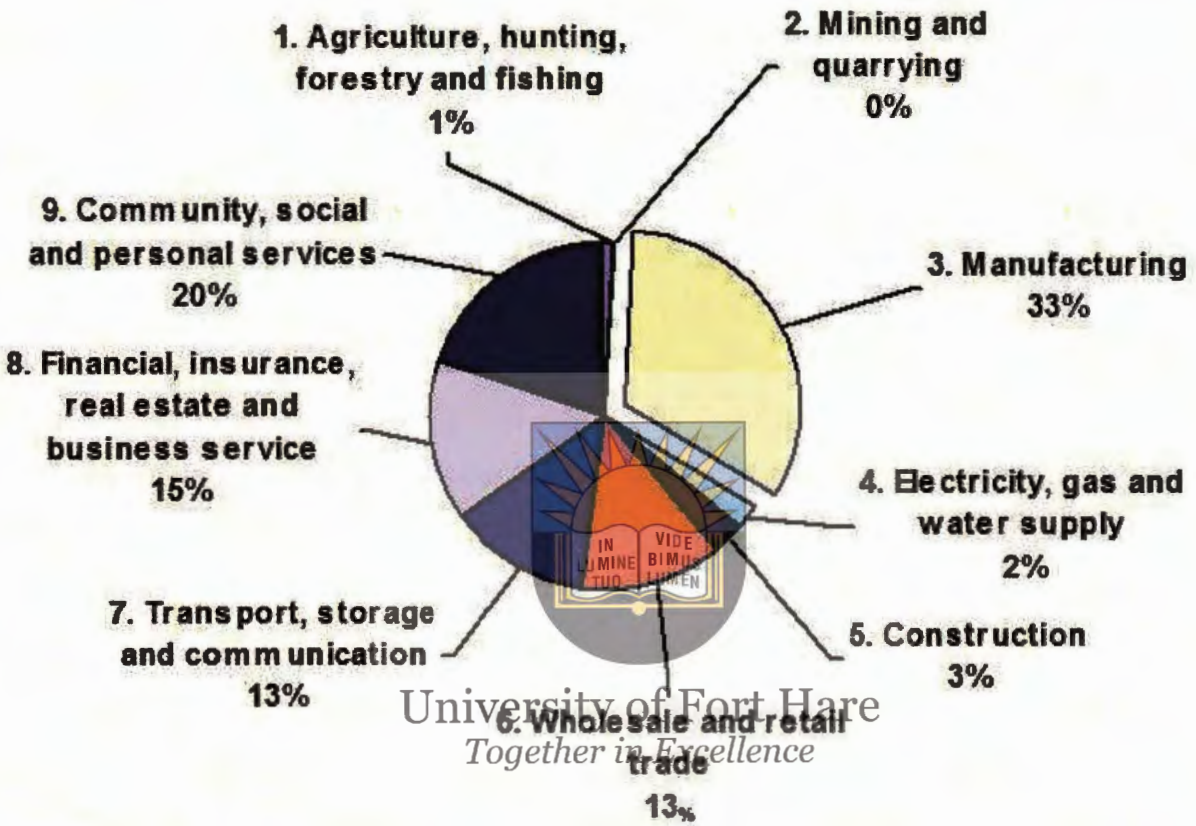


Figure 3.3: Contributions of different sectors to the economy

### 3.4.4 Educational Facilities

According to the municipal website, the Nelson Mandela Bay possesses excellent education facilities, which include:

- (a) Altogether 273 schools
- (b) One university (the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University), which had over 20 000 students in the year 2008

(c) Four technical colleges and two FET institutions, namely the PE College and the Midlands College.

These statistics show that education forms one of the priority areas of the administration. One would therefore anticipate that literacy levels are high. This may subsequently mean that any effort in trying to use ICTs in the area has a big probability to be a success given that education is readily available although affordability is still a controversial issue throughout the whole country.

### 3.4.5 Political Governance



In the year 2008, the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality had 120 Councilors: 60 Proportional Representation (PR) as well as another 60 Ward Councilors (NMBM, 2008-2012). The administrative structure is such that the speaker is the chairperson of the municipality's council.

On the other hand, the municipal manager is the head of the administration as well as the accounting officer. He is supported by the chief operating officer, the chief financial officer, chief of staff and a few executive directors. The political leadership and the administration complement each other in order to achieve the objectives of the IDP.

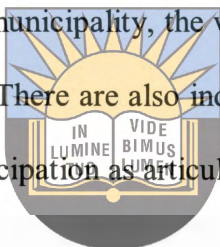
Closely linked to the public sphere discourse, the municipality has managed to erect a lot of infra-structure for communal gatherings and use. These include municipal halls, customer care centers and libraries. Table 3.1 shows the infrastructure that the government has erected which enhances deliberation within the citizenry. From the table, one may deduce that with proper policies in place, there are a lot of opportunities and goodwill by administrators to involve

citizens in public meetings and engagements. One would also assume that computers and possibly the Internet may have been integrated into this infrastructure by now.

Type of Structure	Number of Buildings
Community and municipal halls	31
Customer Care Centers	13
Libraries	22

**Table 3.1: Communal Infrastructure in the NMBM**

Within the political administration of the municipality, the white paper emphasizes great citizen participation in all spheres of governance. There are also indications that the trend is developing towards a more modern way of public participation as articulated below:



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Good corporate governance underpins all the programmes and projects presented in this IDP. Good governance dictates that the Municipality should conduct its business in an open, transparent and accountable manner. For this to be realized, community participation is essential. The establishment of a caring environment requires emphasis not only on community participation, but also on customer care. In this regard, it is vital that the Municipal bridges the so-called digital divide, so that residents will have access to digital technology, affordable high speed internet and voice services.

NMBM IDP (2008-2012, 145)

While it is widely believed that ICTs have tremendous potential in altering the interaction between the public and their administrators, today they remain complementary to traditional tools for public consultation (Arocena and Senker, 2003). This is especially so given the large digital gap between the haves and have-nots in the African context. According to the NMBM IDP (2008-2012), a review of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries' experience reveals that there are three key factors for consideration when seeking to use ICTs for online citizen engagement, namely: Timing, Tailoring and Integration. These three are now going to be discussed.

### **Timing**

This stage is hugely characterized by electronic information dissemination as compared to public interactions over the cyber-space. This phenomenon is not surprising considering that this is early enough in the process to be most open to suggestions from citizens. This stage may also be a sign of the exploratory or experimental nature of these online initiatives, given that this is a phase where online deliberations will be most likely to complement (rather than replace) traditional methods for policy-making (NMBM Communication Policy, 2001). The NMBM IDP (2008-2012) ascertains that the majority of the case studies of countries that have undergone or attempted to facilitate online engagement are to be found at the **agenda-setting stage** of the policy cycle. A more detailed discussion on the policy cycle for online deliberations is done in the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of this study.

There are arguably very few countries that have developed sound online tools appropriate for use at all stages of the policy cycle. A lot of them have undertaken online engagement at a specific



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stage; for example policy formulation or monitoring (Häyhtiö and Keskinen, 2005). It therefore follows that these nations have not managed to fully implement ICTs in the whole public participation discourse. Whether the lack of examples of online engagement during the implementation and evaluation stages of policy-making is an indication that they are inherently less willing to the use of new ICTs or simply less widespread at this time remains an open question (NMBM IDP, 2008-2012).

### **Tailoring**

A number of scholars have acknowledged the fact that a wide range of public bodies are now increasingly exploring the use of new ICTs in engaging citizens in policy-making (Backus, 2001; Baiocchi, 2003; Chitnis, 2005; Parnell, Pieterse, & Wooldridge, 2008). These public bodies range from local governments to national governments and parliaments as well as those operating at the intergovernmental or international level such as the European Commission.



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Clearly, the objectives and capacity of the online engagement efforts undertaken by these bodies differ a great deal since some use the platforms for local urban planning, others for national education policies, political debates and other causes. The target groups addressed also vary accordingly, and may include all citizens (*e.g.* within a given geographic area), all interested parties (*i.e.* independently of location) or specific sub-sections of the population such as the marginalized groups, entrepreneurs, and the youth (Chitnis, 2005).

## Integration

A lot of online public deliberation cases have highlighted the value of ensuring the merger of both online and traditional methods for citizen engagement in policy-making, rather than making them exclusive of each other (NMBM Communication Policy, 2001). This amalgamation is conceived both in terms of providing information on the policy subject or the online engagement exercise itself (such as through posters, printed brochures, local press) and when providing a range of options through which citizens may provide feedback (as in post, telephone, fax as well as email or co-ordinate traditional and online discussion forums). ICTs can also be used to assemble and analyze spontaneous comments and complaints that contain helpful information for policy-makers for example on problems with policy implementation.



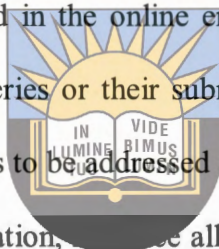
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The specific technologies chosen for online engagement vary in their degree of sophistication – most examples feature a dedicated website with email options (Vatikiotis, 2005). Others implement specialized software to manage online deliberation in a discussion forum or use password-protected discussion areas for registered users as is the case with the SABC News website ([www.sabcnews.com](http://www.sabcnews.com)). Ensuring competent and constructive moderation of online deliberations is therefore a very crucial factor for success in cases of these relatively high technical operations.

Timing, tailoring and integration are therefore important aspects in ensuring that an online citizen participation platform achieves the intended results. Good timing ensures that all the stakeholders concerned are ready for the programme. On the other hand, the programme needs to

be designed taking the users' needs into consideration. This whole process cannot be expected to happen overnight hence the need for integrating it with pre-existing programmes.

Even though Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) offer significant opportunities for greater citizen engagement in policy-making, the same technologies also raise a wide range of challenges for governments. (Dahlgren, 2006) has managed to come up with a number of these challenges and questions. These range from the concern on how citizens' rights of access to information are to be ensured in the online era to determining the status of civil servants' online responses to citizens' queries or their submissions to an electronic discussion forum. Another important aspect also needs to be addressed and this is asking about what aspects of government's current structure, organization, resource allocations and available skills need to change to respond to new standards in their interactions with citizens. Only a few OECD member countries have begun to address such issues for example by developing a code of conduct for civil servants, or official guidelines on answering citizens' emails (Kellner, 2000).



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In its bid to achieve the municipality's objectives, the NMBM has identified e-governance as one of the pillars in improving the situation. The municipality regards e-government as composed of three key strands:

- e-service delivery
- e-governance
- e-democracy

Delivering each of these strands requires that councils have the right kind of technology that can manage and update the sheer volume of information that is needed (NMBM Communication Policy, 2001).

### 3.5 Conclusion

The chapter has dealt with some administrative aspects of successful online public participation. It has been identified that a lot of commitment needs to be invested in the programme for it to run as intended. The background to the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality has also been provided and this will help in understanding why some phenomena in the e-governance discourse happen the way they do.

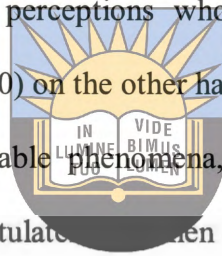


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# CHAPTER FOUR: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## 4.1 Introduction

This study is underpinned by two participatory concepts. They are: Habermas' Public Sphere concept, and the Participatory Communication for Development concept. Kumar (1999: 48) defines concepts as "mental images or perceptions whose meanings vary markedly from individual to individual." Gunter (2002: 210) on the other hand, defines a concept as "an abstract idea that embodies the nature of observable phenomena, or an interpretation of why such phenomena occur." McQuail (2000: 7) postulates that when one concept or a set of them develop into a "systematic set of ideas that can help make sense of a phenomenon, guide action or predict a consequence", they become theories. In this respect, concepts and theories are inseparable. It is for this reason that this chapter presents the concepts in conjunction with models/theories that inform them.



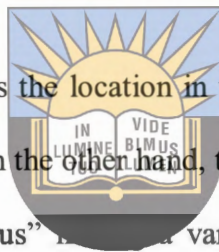
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## 4.2 Jurgen Habermas' Public Sphere Concept

### 4.2.1 Contextualizing the Public Sphere

Coined by Habermas in the theory of communicative action, the public sphere is the space that "facilitates maximum public participation and debate over the key issues of the current conjuncture and which consequently promotes the cause of participatory democracy" (Kellner, 1979: 50). Habermas also regards the public sphere as that space which is beyond the influence

of systems such as economy, church, and the state. It is part of that space in which “*communicative action* takes place, as opposed to the *functionalistic reason* conceptualized within systems theory” (Baoill, 2000: 2). Within this public sphere discourse, Habermas’ focus was mainly on democratization which was linked with emphasis on political participation as the core of a democratic society and as an essential element in individual self-development. This study therefore used this concept to assess how the Internet was being used as a public sphere especially to enhance democracy in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality (NMBM).



The public sphere can also be described as the location in which the processes of formation of public attitudes and opinions take place. On the other hand, this terrain can be realized as a social space, having at its base a “dynamic nexus” of a variety of actors, factors and contexts (Sinha, 1997). Descriptively, it refers to that dimension of collective decision-making to which citizens come together “not as subjects of the state or as private economic actors concerned with matters of individual interest, but rather as a free and open public body to discuss matters of general interest” (Roderick, 1986: 42). It was therefore investigated to ascertain whether or not the NMBM’s website was fulfilling this expectation given that it was being used as a form of the public sphere.

Building from the above characteristics, the public sphere can therefore be described as less structured and less rigid. This comes mainly because of the relatively less influences of the market economies as discussed in the literature review. Consequently, the public sphere enhances meaningful public communication. It does this through the provision of a diversity of ways of relating one person to others or affecting the mindset and behaviour of individuals

(Habermas, 1997). The public sphere therefore provides members of the public with a platform to deliberate on issues that affect them on a daily basis. Given this characteristic, public communication therefore has an indispensable role in giving life to public debates, and in saving them from the market forces (Mitrović, 1999). This study sought to determine whether or not the NMBM's website had the capacity to perform this role of the public sphere as described above.

The principles of the public sphere involve an open discussion of all issues of general concern in which discursive argumentation is employed to ascertain general interests and the public good (Sinha, 1997). The public sphere therefore presupposes freedom of speech and assembly, a free press, and the right to freely participate in political debate and decision-making. All these factors could arguably be easily carried out over the Internet provided that well-articulated strategies are put in place.

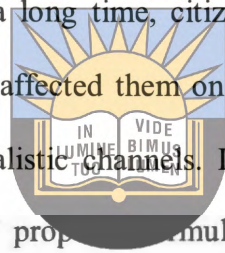


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On the other hand, Kellner (1979) has managed to go beyond Habermas to conceive the public sphere as a site of information, discussion, contestation, political struggle, and organization that includes the broadcasting media and new cyberspaces as well as the face-to-face interactions of everyday life. He argues that in the contemporary era, “progressives” need to make use of new communications broadcast media. He gives an example of himself in which he was involved in a public access television program in Austin, Texas in the 1970s. The project has produced over 600 programs and won the George Stoney Award for public affairs television. His argument maintains that radio, television, and other electronic modes of communication were creating new public spheres of debate, discussion and information. Activists and intellectuals who wanted to engage the public, to be where the people were at, and who wanted to intervene in the public

affairs of their society were then supposed to make use of these technologies and develop communication politics and new media projects.

In Habermas' terms, the public sphere consisted of organs of information and political debate such as newspapers and journals, as well as institutions of political discussion such as parliaments, political clubs, literary salons, public assemblies, pubs and coffee houses, meeting halls, and other public spaces where socio-political discussion took place (Macedo, 1999). From these examples, one may argue that for a long time, citizens have not been in a position to actively engage in debates on issues that affected them on an ongoing basis without avoiding bureaucratic and the predominantly capitalistic channels. It is therefore argued here that this deficiency can be greatly minimized if properly formulated Internet strategies for public communication are put in place at local municipalities in South Africa. This is because citizens will have the platform to participate in their own development through interacting with policy-makers who represent their communities.



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Kellner (1979) outlines three basic features that Habermas said should characterize a truly democratic public sphere. These are:

**Universal access:** Every citizen should have access to the space so that they can participate in issues that affect them.

**Rational debate:** Any issue or topic can be suggested by any participant and it will be debated rationally until consensus is achieved.

**Disregard of rank:** The status of participants is ignored and bureaucracy is minimized.

The above three characteristics were utilized as benchmarks in the assessment of the kind of interactions that the website and the Internet in general, were fostering in the NMB Municipality's engagement with its citizens. While one may easily pick up that universal access to the Internet is not yet a reality in the developing world for example, it is the task of this study to establish what was being done about it. Again, it was also worth investigating this phenomenon regardless of whether it was being practiced at a very small scale. The intention is to determine if e-governance had the potential to overcome the deficiencies of the traditional platforms for public engagement.



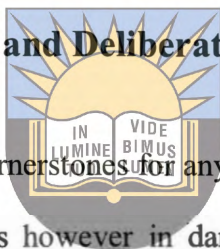
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It must however be noted that e-government has received considerable attention in the recent past. In South Africa, the national government has developed a website ([www.sa.gov.za](http://www.sa.gov.za)) that provides information and services of the government. The South African Police Service (SAPS) has developed its website for optimal service delivery (Bothma and Sonderling, 2004), while the Western Cape provincial government has engaged its citizens via online means in the 2003 Cape IT Initiative (Vosloo and Belle, 2006). It therefore follows that the development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), especially the Internet, is considered as the main driver behind e-government initiatives.

South Africa stands to benefit from advantages of these e-government initiatives such as; to support government's change towards a more democratic institution, to facilitate communication

between central and local governments, to improve transparency, control, and accountability towards implementation of good corporate governance and to enable transformation towards the information society era (Indrajit, 2002; Haryono and Widiwardono, 2004) as quoted by Wahid (2006). The Internet has therefore been extensively used towards the advancement of citizen participation in governance hence one can safely argue that it is a public sphere in the modern information era.

#### **4.2.2 Threats to the Public Sphere and Deliberative Democracy**



The public sphere is arguably one of the cornerstones for any democratic society and polity. This critical component of democratic states is however in danger of being overwhelmed by the bigger voices of the market. In many parts of the world, various states have joined hands with the transnational sector to dismantle the system of public communication (Baicocchi, 2003). This has either been done deliberately or through the diffusion of the values perpetrated by the market forces of today. There is therefore a need for new voices that defend the existence of public communication if democracy is to have a chance of surviving. Efforts to counter these threats to the public sphere should be organized at international as well as grass roots level with a view to incorporate local resistance within a plan for global intervention (Sinha, 1997).

A closer look at the capitalistic societies of today will reveal that the market forces have the powerful ability to create a process of inclusion-exclusion in which certain issues finding favour with it are legitimized, and the issues which fall out of favour are excluded from public debates (Vatikiotis, 2005). If one looks at the way media institutions get their revenues for example, it

becomes clear that sometimes the media broadcasts content that is pro-advertisers to ensure continuous flow of income. A typical example of how advertisers may have an influence on the content of the media is the recent story about the Sunday Times and the South African government. The government threatened to stop sending their adverts to the media house after the newspaper had published a successive series of articles 'exposing' the then Minister of Health - Manto Tshabalala Msimang.

The public sphere is therefore easily vulnerable to manipulation which consequently threatens the thriving of democracy in any society. Regardless of this situation, the point remains that public communication is a necessity, though not an exclusive condition of democratic society and polity. It is the best available indicator to measure the potential capability of citizens struggling to establish better governance. It is the most effective means to translate citizenship from an abstract idea to social and political practice (Rodriguez, 2001) in Vatikiotis (2005). Employing the Internet as a public sphere appears to be one of the best ways forward.

Again, it is important to note that the public sphere is becoming more and more threatened by the phenomenal rise of the market influence on both private and public life. Tsagarousianou (1998) argues that market induced information usually requires no reciprocity from its receivers. It instead tends to create silent and obedient citizens devoid of critical faculty. For the citizens who become its passive recipients, the only act permitted by the market is "non-action." It therefore follows that the implication of this concealed process is explicitly political which means the negation of the scope of diversity and dissent which are a probable outcome of people's voice on issues that concern their life.



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There are skepticisms over cases in which democracy thrives well under the shelter of the market. Sinha (1997) for example, argues that people fail to notice how the market-pliant democracy pays a lip service to popular participation in these cases. A critical analysis of the market indicates that this system kills people's capacity by unilaterally determining their perceptions, self images, interpersonal relations, ideologies and other forms of expressions.

Although freedom of expression as enshrined in the South African constitution is prevalent in the country, the mass media (which forms a significant part of the public sphere) is skewed along ownership and control patterns that are predominantly capitalistic in nature. This renders the most part of the media ineffective in facilitating three characteristics of a truly democratic public sphere as discussed above. In addition, some scholars have attacked the media on the basis of its lack of interactivity through its concentration on the dissemination of information while neglecting active audience participation:

The mass media engage in one-way communication that does not allow feedback, thus obliterating another feature of a democratic public sphere. In addition, the media rarely encourage participation in public action. In these ways, they foster social passivity and the fragmentation of the public sphere into privatized consumers.

Adorno (1976: 45)

Chomsky and Herman (2002) buttresses Adorno's argument by ascertaining that the basically non-interactive mass electronic media, associated with overwhelmingly one way-flow of visuals and messages, and considerably lower level of 'norm expectations' from the audience/public, promotes passivity of the highest kind, paving in turn the way for "manufacturing consent." Opponents of this undemocratic system stand to benefit through the use of the Internet provided proper strategies and policies are put in place.

The discussion on the mass media and the market has revealed that the two are closely intertwined into a vicious web that goes against the full realization of individuals' potential to determine their own destinies. The most acknowledged, powerful and reliable agent of the market-propelled diffusion through infusion process is the mass media (Sinha, 1997). This is more evident considering the contemporary trends where people tend to adopt popular culture in many cases unconsciously. Any reference to the mass media which acts as an instrument of metanarratives of corporate (and cyber-age) capitalism, inevitably gives rise to questions about ownership and control, and functions (Chomsky and Herman, 2002). Since no one can really say that they own the Internet, this platform could be the best alternative in a bid to avoid these conglomerates that own and control big stakes in the mass media.

Much to the detriment of the public communication is the growing pervasiveness of the electronic mass media over the print media (Adorno, 1976). This trend has made it easier to structure the consciousness and self identity of individuals and groups in accordance with the



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logic and image of the market. Generally, advertisements on the electronic media present the 'ideal' form of a woman as one who is slim and tall for example. This has resulted in a lot of girls trying to copy these illusions leading to various problems like anorexia and other girls starving themselves to death. It is therefore logical to ascertain that neither the statist media nor the corporate media provides ingredients for rejuvenating public communication. This remains true even if, as mentioned before, the media in general has a vital role in public communication. Hamelink (1996: 169) as quoted by Sinha (1997) is quite right in suggesting that neither the 'princes' nor the 'merchants' - those ruling the state and the corporate world, respectively - can be entrusted with the responsibility of creating a pluralist environment conducive to public communication.



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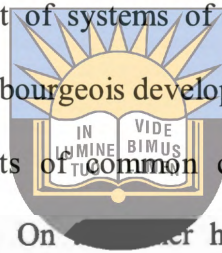
### **4.2.3 The Development of the Public Sphere**

Habermas (1979) has managed to demonstrate the development of the public sphere arguing that a "refeudalization" of the public sphere began occurring in the late 19th century. The transformation involved private interests assuming direct political functions as powerful corporations came to control and manipulate the media and the state. At the same time, the state began to play a more important role in the private realm and everyday life. This condition inevitably resulted in the blurring of the differences between state and civil society as well as between the public and private sphere.

As the public sphere declined, citizens became consumers, dedicating themselves more towards passive consumption and private concerns than to issues of the common good and democratic

participation (Habermas, 1997). This development clearly indicates that the public sphere itself goes through a lot of paradigm shifts with the rise of new social movements, new technologies, and new spaces of public interaction.

Habermas' analysis indicates that in the bourgeois public sphere, public opinion is formed by political debates and consensus (Servaes, 1989). On the other hand, in the debased public sphere of welfare state capitalism, public opinion is administered by political, economic, and media elites that manage public opinion as part of systems of management and social control. It therefore follows that in an earlier stage of bourgeois development, public opinion was formed in open political debate concerning interests of common concern that attempted to forge a consensus in regard to general interests. On the other hand, in the contemporary stage of capitalism, public opinion is increasingly being formed by dominant elites and thus represents, for the most part, their particular private interests. No longer is rational consensus among individuals and groups in the interests of articulation of common goods the norm (Häyhtiö and Keskinen, 2005). Instead, contemporary politics is characterized by struggles among groups to advance their own private interests.



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Arguing for the transformation of the public sphere, Habermas distinguished two kinds of citizens under different forms of the public sphere. One is seen as an active, participatory bourgeois public sphere in the heroic era of liberal democracy while the other is more privatized and located in a bureaucratic industrial society in which the media and elites controlled the public sphere (Mitrović, 1999). Habermas analyses the historical origin of the bourgeois public sphere which is followed by an account of its structural change in the contemporary era with the

rise of state capitalism, the culture industries, and the increasingly powerful positions of economic corporations and big business in public life. On this account, big economic and governmental organizations took over the public sphere, while citizens became comfortable with becoming primarily consumers of goods, services, political administration and spectators. Rational debate and consensus has thus been replaced by managed discussion and manipulation by the machinations of advertising and political consulting agencies. As noted by Habermas, “Publicity loses its critical function in favor of a staged display; even arguments are transmuted into symbols to which again one cannot respond by arguing but only by identifying with them” (1979: 40).

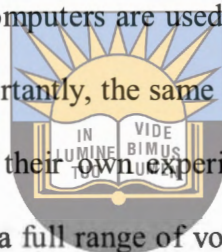


The rise of the Internet has the potential to expand the realm for democratic participation and debate and creates new public spaces for political intervention. The argument here is that broadcast media like radio and television, and now computers, have produced new public spheres and spaces for information, debate, and participation. All of these platforms possess the potential to rejuvenate public communication which enhances democracy by increasing the dissemination and deliberation of critical and progressive ideas. At the same time, this has brought with it new possibilities for manipulation, social control, the promotion of conservative positions, and intensifying of differences between haves and have-nots (Bedi, 1999). Language issues are again a major drawback since the majority of the information available on the Internet is in English which may not be a favorable medium for some people.

Participation in the new/emergent public spheres (computer bulletin boards and discussion groups, talk radio and television, and the sphere of cyberspace democracy) requires critical

intellectuals to gain new technical skills and to master new technologies. For citizens in a developing country like South Africa to fully embrace the use of the Internet in local governance, a lot has to be done through providing easy access to ICTs, adoption of massive investments in infrastructure, training and awareness campaigns for example.

A new paradigm of democratic polity will therefore be concerned that new media and computer technologies be used to serve the interests of the people and not corporate elites. It will also attempt to see that broadcast media and computers are used to inform and enlighten individuals rather than to manipulate them. More importantly, the same discourse will teach individuals how to use the new technologies to articulate their own experiences and interests and to promote democratic debate and diversity, allowing a full range of voices and ideas to become part of the cyber democracy of the future (Best and MacLay, 2002).



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#### **4.2.4 Critique of the Public Sphere Discourse**

Habermas' idealization of the earlier bourgeois public sphere as a space of rational discussion and consensus has been sharply criticized from different angles. Rasmussen (1990) doubts for example, if democratic politics were ever fueled by norms of rationality or public opinion formed by rational debate and consensus to the extent stylized in Habermas's concept of the bourgeois public sphere. He therefore implies that there has always been an element of domination even in the earlier and simpler stages of the public sphere.

Again, not only does Habermas limit democracy to the sphere of discussion within the life world and civil society, he omits the arguably necessary presuppositions for democratic deliberation and argumentation; an informed and intellectually competent citizenry (Poster, 1999). Here, the focus should be on education and the media. This is because schooling and the media play a key role in enabling individuals to be informed, taught to seek information, and, if effectively educated, to critically assess and appraise information. This will enable them to transform information into knowledge and understanding thereby making citizens capable of participating in democratic discussion and deliberation. Habermas failed to critically come to terms with this requirement.



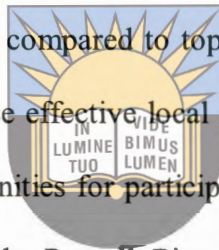
Gillwald (1993) attacks Habermas' ideas about the public sphere by pointing out recent developments that have rendered the media failures in enhancing democracy. He gives privatization, conglomeration, deregulation and transnationalization of the media as the factors that make the realisation of Habermas' ideals even less likely. Consequently, "even public service media, increasingly commanded by commercial imperatives, fail to fulfill their democratic function" (Gillwald, 1993: 72).

#### **4.2.5 The Way Forward**

Foregoing discussions have revealed that the public sphere has been prone to manipulation by market forces thus killing its liberative nature as conceived by Habermas. The discussion on the development of this public communication platform has also highlighted that technological advances have had a great impact on its transformation. If one considers the use of intranets that

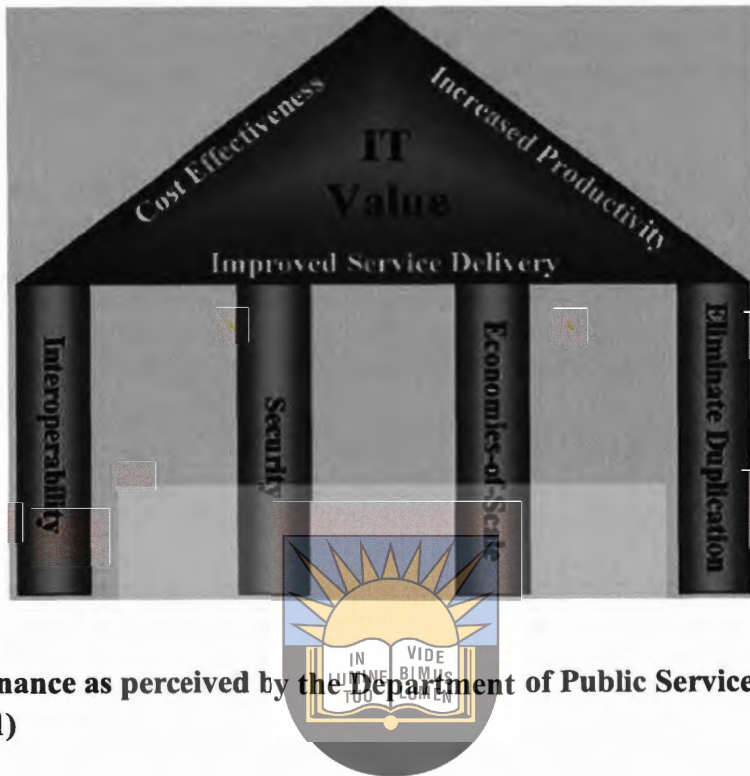
serve localized communities, it suffices to argue that the Internet and computers help in achieving the essential elements of a democratic public sphere as already articulated. It is possible for example, that citizens create and relay messages that serve their own interests and that are not influenced by political forces over the Internet as compared to the bureaucratic TV, radio and newspaper settings. Because of this, local municipalities can be better able to interact with their citizens in a manner that recognizes the potential and competence of residents without undue manipulative processes.

This kind of horizontal communication as compared to top-down dissemination of information encourages public dialogue that “...produce effective local government that is responsive to the needs of the poor and can provide opportunities for participation around issues that matter most in people’s lives” (World Bank) as quoted by Parnell, Pieterse, Swilling and Wooldridge (2008: 7).



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In South Africa, the Department of Public Service and Administration has identified e-governance as the way forward in enhancing productivity as well as to improve service delivery. The department has come up with an e-governance policy that they summarized in the diagram on Figure 4.1 below.



**Figure 4.1: E-Governance as perceived by the Department of Public Service and administration (2001)**

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From the diagram, the four pillars are showing the foundation of the e-governance initiative that contributes to enhanced service delivery. E-government is centered on security of all the stakeholders' information, interoperability of the various systems involved, benefits of economies of scale as well as the avoidance of duplication. Consequently, a successful e-governance strategy is conceived to be cost effective and ultimately leads to increased productivity. All these benefits are as a result of the contributions of Information and Communication Technologies.

Public communication is therefore in need of reinvigoration in line with the social changes and globalization trends. This raises the question of how to get to the take-off stage. The means of its

realization can be found in local/community-level grass roots communication (Pratiba and Rogers, 2001). More specifically, this could be realized through dialogues based on face-to-face small group participation or in non-commercial alternative media (folk drama or folk ballads dealing with political issues), informal polyphonic chats, and even in self as a site for resistance (Rogers, 2000).

Faced with the traditional media's impasse on failing to encourage deliberative debates on one hand, and the hype on the ICT for development discourse by African governments on the other hand, this study focused on the use of the Internet in local government citizen participation to ascertain whether it had managed to accomplish democratic outcomes as envisaged by Habermas and Freire. The latter's' concept of participatory communication for development will now be disussed.



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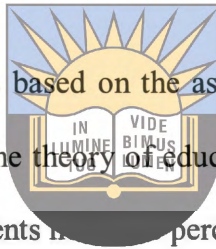
## **4.3 The Participatory Communication for Development Concept**

### **4.3.1 Development of the Concept**

Developed by Paulo Freire in the early 1970s, the participatory communication concept stresses the significance of “cultural identity of local communities, and of democratization and participation at all levels - international, national, local and individual” (Servaes 1989, 75). The concept is therefore useful in the notion of citizen participation in influencing how local

municipalities are run. Freire (1972) argues that the whole process ought to be democratic if the full potential of the participants is to be realized.

In so doing, Freire posits that there is need for a paradigm shift from autocratic tendencies to more liberal systems of governance. At the same time, people need to put their differences aside and embrace diversity and plurality. Consequently, citizens need to respect their counterparts' attitudes, to have mutual trust and to be able to listen to what others say.

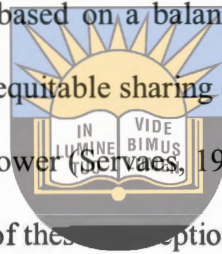


The participatory model in development is based on the assumption about “knowledge” of the beneficiaries. When Freire came up with the theory of education for liberation in the 1970s, he was attempting to promote the idea of students who were perceived as being mere receptacles that can be “filled” with knowledge they receive from the teachers. He therefore devised a new educational technique where he suggested that both the subject (teacher) – object (student) relationship needs to be replaced with a subject-object duality. This meant that both the teacher and the student could learn from each other through a process of dialogue (Freire, 1993). This concept, which has its roots in adult educational programs in Latin America, has been adopted by a lot of development practitioners after the social change interventions that used top-down positivistic approaches were challenged for their lack of sensitivity to local or rural peoples’ knowledge (Chambers, 1983; Servaes, 1989).

According to Freire (1993), participatory communication for development is based on the premise that development programs would be relevant, effective and sustainable, provided people are actively involved in the programs. The contemporary models for development

therefore tend to highlight the importance of community participation and rely on communication as a means to empower the community.

The practice of full “interactive participation” started with beneficiaries deciding which development initiatives should be pursued, whether the initiatives were feasible and prioritizing those that were, and only then deciding how to carry them out, all the while keeping in mind the requirements for sustainability and eventual “self-mobilization” upon project completion (Rogers, 2000). Participation is therefore based on a balanced playing ground where different actors gain from each other. It involves an equitable sharing of political and economic power and structural changes in order to redistribute power (Servaes, 1999). More research however needs to be conducted to determine the practicality of these options in a variety of societies.



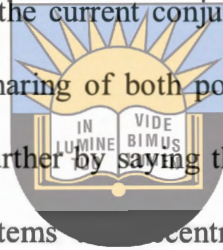
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Participatory communication realizes the growing interdependence between nations and communities as well as the need for improved dialogue between communities, local and national political institutions. This paradigm acknowledges that there is no longer a clear demarcation of boundaries between the central and the peripheral nations or the developed and the developing countries (Servaes, 1999).

The participatory communication approach to development also emphasizes concepts such as cultural identity and the recognition of specific local cultures. It opposes the existence of a single, western dominated capitalistic culture promoted in the modernization era. Neither does it support the emphasis on self-reliance and ethnocentrism that was promoted as part of the dependency theory (Melkote & Steeves, 2001). If a full participatory approach is to be adopted

within a local setting for example, it should be able to encompass the values and belief systems of the local people rather than predominantly relying on foreign models of development.

With the emergence of new and interactive forms of communication, citizen participation has been enhanced. Notwithstanding their affordability, the use of the Internet, radio and television has managed to make the voice of the ordinary citizen heard, given the more interactive nature of these media. Call-in programmes and web logs are just but a few examples of platforms where citizens contribute to ongoing debates of the current conjuncture. Freire (1972) ascertains that participation involves a more equitable sharing of both political and economic power. In this regard, Servaes (1999) takes the debate further by saying that the participatory communication discourse should ensure that media systems are decentralized and put emphasis on self-management by local communities. This may however not go down well with those who favor the status quo of the capitalistic societies for it means a threat to their dominance and hegemony.



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Although participatory communication seeks to empower people, one may argue that it has to work within the existing power structures which are in most cases, controlled by the elites. This however presents a problem for those who benefit from the status quo may be reluctant to the idea of empowering community members who seek to take control of their environment. This has been documented in some field studies on empowering women in the developing countries. The studies have shown that although women (the traditionally oppressed groups) can exercise agency and bring about social change, they still remain disempowered in certain social interactions such as with their husband or with male political leaders (Papa, Auwal and Singhal, 1995; Shefer-Rogers, Rao, Rogers and Wayangankar, 1998) in Chitnis (2005).

Domination, according to the structuration theory, depends on the mobilization of two kinds of resources; allocative and authoritative resources (McQuail, 2000). Allocative resources refer to the transformative capacity of generating command over material phenomenon such as the economic institutions. On the other hand, authoritative resources refer to the transformative capacity of generating command over people such as political institutions or collectives of powerful elites in a social system (Giddens, 1984). Since these modes of domination exist in all social systems, it is not sufficient to simply empower people by recognizing their knowledgeability and capacity to bring about change. There needs to be a dialogue between the people in power and the community members for social change to occur.



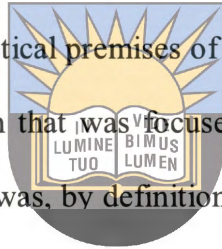
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Participatory communication will inevitably face bureaucracy in that someone else at some stage has to play the role of a gatekeeper for the whole deliberative process to be running. Someone else will have to receive and read a message sent via e-mail or the discussion forums for example, and decide whether the argument therein deserves consideration or not. This brings the issue of power into the limelight.

Power is understood as a form of legitimation because elites hold power not because they control the means of production, but because of their ability to legitimize certain practices over others (Macedo, 1999). The participatory approach to development challenges this ability of the elites to exercise power by empowering the locals or by giving a voice to the voiceless in the society. This inadvertently creates tension between the already existing elites who are powerful and the end beneficiaries who gain power as part of the development program. Although attempts are

being made to include the elites in the development program, the present literature falls short of explaining the complications involved in overcoming this power conflict (Kellner, 2000).

The participatory concept differs from older views regarding development such as the modernization paradigm on the grounds that the latter promoted a top-down, ethnocentric and paternalistic view of development (Gutmann and Thompson, 1996). After decades of interventions, the failure to address poverty and other structural problems in the Third World needed to be explained on the faulty theoretical premises of the programs that were based on the modernization paradigm. Any intervention that was focused on improving messages to better reach individuals or only change behavior was, by definition, unable to implement social change (Chitnis, 2005).



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Developmental theories also criticized traditional approaches for having been designed and executed in the capital cities by local elites with guidance and direction from foreign specialists. This supports the general belief that usually local people are not involved in preparing and instrumenting developmental interventions. Interventions basically conceived of local residents as passive receivers of decisions made outside of their communities, and in many cases, instrumented ill-conceived plans to achieve development. Governments decided what was best for agricultural populations, for example, without giving them a sense of ownership in the systems that were introduced (Servaes, 1999).

The top-down approach of persuasion models therefore implicitly assumed that the knowledge of governments and agencies was correct, and that indigenous populations either did not know or had incorrect beliefs. Because programs came from outside villages, communities felt that innovations did not belong to them but to the government and thus expected the latter to fix things when they went wrong (Coldevin, 2001). The sense of disempowerment was also rooted in the fact that targeted populations did not have the choice to reject recommendations or introduce modifications to these interventions brought from outside agencies and the government.



There is a lot of literature on examples of participatory communication for development from both the developed and developing world. In Latin America, miners and peasants radio in Bolivia is documented, grassroots video in peasant and indigenous movements in Brazil, tape recorders in Guatemala, small-scale multimedia in Peru and other cases of low-powered media based in unions and churches were offered as concrete examples of participatory communication development (Beltrán, 1993). Canada's "Fogo process" was another experience informed by similar principles in which populations living in remote areas actively produced videos to discuss community issues of people living in remote areas and to communicate with outsiders about their concerns and expectations (Williamson, 1991).

In Africa, popular theater has been successfully used to increase women's participation and ability to deal with primary health care problems. Through songs and storytelling, women were

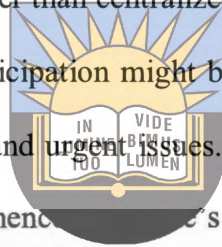
able to raise awareness and attention to issues and address problems, something that had not been achieved through “modern” media such as television and newspapers (Mlama, 1991). Community participation through popular theater motivated rural communities to become involved in health care. Participation was credited for the reduction of preventable diseases such as cholera and severe diarrhea after communities constructed infrastructure that helped to improve sanitary conditions (Kalipeni and Kamlongera, 1996).



Participatory communication identified encouraging participation, stimulating critical thinking, and stressing process rather than specific outcomes associated with modernization and progress, as the main tasks of development communication (Mafin, 1991). Participation needed to be present in all stages of development projects. Communities should therefore be encouraged to participate in decision-making, implementation, and evaluation of projects. This would give a sense of involvement in their lives and communities, and provide them with a sense of ownership and skills that they can use beyond the timetable of development projects (Kavinya, Alam & Decock, 1994). Community empowerment has become one of the main contributions of participatory theories to development communication. Empowerment is possible only if community members critically reflect on their experiences and understand the reasons for failure and success of interventions (Bradford & Gwynne 1995, Purdey, Adhikari, Robinson & Cox, 1994) in Waisbord (2000). In all these processes, the Internet may fit perfectly well if well-thought strategies are designed and put in place in the public terrain of the South African local government sphere.

### 4.3.2 Critique of the Participation for Development Concept

One problem in participatory models is that it was not clear that communities needed to be involved for certain results to be achieved (Chitnis, 2005). It is fair enough for example to argue that in some cases such as epidemics and other public health crises, quick and top-down solutions could achieve positive results. Chitnis further argues that participation communication ignores that expediency may also positively contribute to development. Belaboring through grassroots decision-making process is slower than centralized decisions and thus not advisable in cases that require prompt resolutions. Participation might be a good long-term strategy but has shortcomings when applied to short-term and urgent issues. In the event of a disaster, decisions need to be made as quickly as possible hence community's participation may just be a dream.



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Another problem identified within the participation for development paradigm is that participation in all stages does not have similar relevance (McKee, 1992). He argues that the concept does not make it explicitly clear what participation entails. If decisions were made outside of the community and the latter was assigned the role of implementing and evaluating results, some positions argued, participation was limited to instances that depended on decisions previously made. Participation is therefore not as simple as it sounds because once someone comes in a community with an idea conceptualized without everyone's input, then questions are bound to be raised on the authenticity of the concept with regards to the community's participation.

Another problem is that the focus on interpersonal relations underplayed the potential of the mass media in promoting development (Coldevin, 2001). Little attention was paid to the uses of the mass media in participatory settings. This angle is principally relevant given that populations, even in remote areas, are constantly exposed to commercial media messages that stand in opposition to the goals set by programs. This lack was particularly visible in Freire's theory of dialogical communication. The theory put much emphasis on group interactions and underplays the role of the mass media in the ever-growing communication for development phenomenon.



Participatory approaches usually avoided the issue that people who lived in non-democratic societies might be suspicious to participate out of fear of retaliation. Moreover, it is a possibility that sometimes people can be manipulated into participating. This would violate local autonomy and the possibility that members might not be interested in taking an active role. Critics argued that participatory communication, like social marketing, could also be seen as foreign, pushing for certain goals and actions that have not resulted from inside communities. Participatory communication did not offer the chance not to participate, and implicitly coerced people to adopt a certain attitude (Baiocchi, 1999). One may therefore argue that the notion of participation is just another kind of hegemony that however seems to be considerate of the voiceless of the society.

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Other critics, particularly in Asia, thought that participatory models were premised on Western-styled ideas of democracy and participation that do not fit political cultures elsewhere. Individualism rather than community, conflict rather than consensus are some of the values that

lie at the heart of participatory models developed in the west. Participation can therefore promote division, confusion, and disruption that do little to solve problems (Baiocchi, 2003). It may privilege powerful and active members of the community at the expense of the community as a whole. Participatory communication should thrive to promote education and decision-making skills, rather than participation for its own sake. Servaes (1999, 23) admits that “participation does not always entail cooperation or consensus. It can often mean conflict and usually poses a threat to existent structures...rigid and general strategies for participation are neither possible nor desirable.”

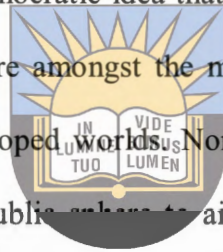


Neither of the dominant paradigms in development communication has been completely replaced by the participatory communication paradigm. Even today, many development projects can be analyzed as using either modernization (e.g. universal access to Internet), dependency (resistance to global capitalism) or a combination of these approaches (involving communities in designing and preparing pro-social messages disseminated using the mass media (Chitnis, 2005).

Despite its shortfalls, the participatory communication concept gives a lot of insight into the deliberative democracy debate. It corresponds with Habermas's vision of public deliberative debates that ought to occur in the public sphere through a democratic process. In all, the concept envisages a conscious citizenry that has the capability of determining its own destiny. To be able to deal effectively with this kind of a society, public institutions or governments need to tolerate and encompass these people's views before any major decisions can be made.

## 4.4 Conclusion

The chapter has dealt with the conceptual framework underlying the whole study. A link has been established between the two concepts and it has been found that both intend to liberate citizens by allowing their views to be considered in decisions that affect them. Just like any other theories that precede them, the public sphere and the deliberative democracy theories have also been criticized for coming up with the democratic idea that does not necessarily originate from within a community. The two however are amongst the most widely used for developmental projects both in the developing and developed worlds. Nonetheless, the central idea remained that an attempt to use the Internet as a public sphere to aid the participation for development discourse might reach even far consequences if enough measures are taken for its proper usage.

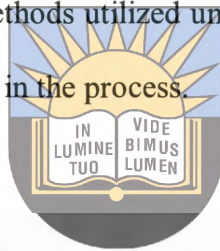


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# CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to outline and discuss the research methods used in the data gathering process for this study. It explores the case study approach to research which was the design adopted in the data gathering process. The specific methods utilized under the case study approach are also outlined justifying why these were selected in the process.



## 5.2 The Case Study Approach

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This research utilized the case study approach to generate the data and information. Yin (1984: 75) defines the case study research method as an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.” Since the study was investigating a contemporary trend that also necessitated the use of multiple methods of acquiring the information, a case study approach inevitably came up as the best way to use under the circumstances.

The decision to use this method was also partly informed by the fact that case studies do not claim to generalize findings to the whole population. This characteristic made it the ideal method

in examining the situation at the NMB Municipality which is just one of the over 280 municipalities in South Africa.

Robson (2002) buttresses Yin's definition of a case study approach by providing a comprehensive list of the features of this approach that makes it the preferred method for use in this particular study. These features include:

1. Selection of a single case (or a small number of related cases) of a situation, individual or group of interest or concern.
2. Study of the case in its context
3. Collection of information via a range of data collection techniques including observation, interview and documentary analysis.



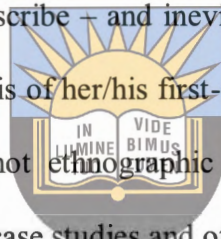
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A close look at the above points reveals that these characteristics are typically for a qualitative research. The qualitative research paradigm was chosen because it allowed for one to use different techniques to understand a social phenomenon as well as to look at the phenomenon from the perspective of the researched. In other words, as observed by Bryman (1988: 61), qualitative research has an expressed commitment to “viewing events, actions, norms, values, etc. from the perspective of the people who are being studied.”

According to Lindlof (1991: 24), the conceptual benchmark of the qualitative research paradigm is “found in the meanings of media content or technology which are enacted in actual practices and performances.” In this study, the media content was being represented by the different kinds

of communications that were taking place over the municipal website. This was so because the municipality was being represented on the cyber-space by its website while the citizens were also utilizing the same platform to communicate with the municipal authorities. It was therefore necessary to interview both the municipal authorities and a sample of the citizens so that their respective viewpoints on the website would be ascertained

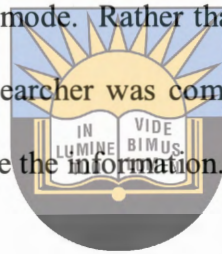
Morley and Silverstone argue that the ethnographer's task is to 'go into the field' and, by way of observation and interview, attempts to "describe – and inevitably interpret – the practices of the subjects in that cultural context, on the basis of her/his first-observation of day-to-day activities" (1991: 153). Although this research is not ethnographic in nature, it utilized some of the ethnographic techniques that overlap with case studies and other qualitative research methods.



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There are various types of case studies and they include longitudinal case studies, snapshot case studies, pre-post case studies, patchwork case studies and comparative case studies (de Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2007). Due to time constraints and the limited financial resources however, only the snapshot case study was used in this particular study. It entails a "detailed, objective study of one research entity at one point in time..." (Seale 2004: 58). It was therefore anticipated that the researcher would collect data at only one point in time in the NMB Municipality which made the findings mostly applicable to that particular period and peculiar to the area under investigation. Although the findings' generalisability could well be applicable to other municipalities with similar circumstances in South Africa, this was not proven here given the qualitative nature of this study.

Semi-structured interviews, document analysis and desktop research were the specific techniques utilized to come up with the findings of the research. The use of these three methods of acquiring data was meant to bring about triangulation which allows an investigator to address a broader range of historical, attitudinal, and behavioural issues (Yin, 2003). Triangulation also ensured the development of converging lines of inquiry in which different methods were used to get more consistent information at the end. Yin goes on to argue that any finding or conclusion in a case study is likely to be much more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information that follow a corroboratory mode. Rather than only getting information from the municipal authorities for example, the researcher was compelled to interview a sample of the municipality's residents so as to corroborate the information.



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Nevertheless, qualitative techniques have their own limitations mostly centered on the high likelihood of the researcher failing to be reflexive. This stems from the fact that most observations and meanings are filtered through the interpretative lens of the researcher and participants being observed, particularly those who take part in interviews, are prone to altering their behaviour as a result of being aware that they are being observed (Babbie, 2001). In the interviews conducted, it was also possible to come across inconsistent information from different interviewees and this could be the reason why the director of communications insisted that his interview be combined with the webmaster's. This arrangement was however changed due to other work commitments that the director had to attend to on the day of the interview. The two interviewees were therefore interviewed separately.

In terms of construct validity which is about establishing correct operational measures for the concepts being studied (Robson, 2002), careful consideration of the possible various methodological techniques used for data collection was taken before data gathering could be initiated. Some of the possible techniques that could have easily been used included surveys and ethnography, but a careful analysis of these methods indicated that they were not the best possible to be used. This study was not interested in coming up with statistics. Rather, it sought to gather rich information about the e-governance discourse. Ultimately, one was compelled to conduct interviews and analyze documents hence the case study approach was eventually utilized.

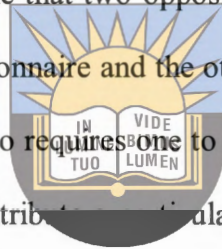


Using more than one source of evidence (documents, desk-top research and interviews) brought about data triangulation. This, according to Yin (2003) addresses the potential problems of construct validity because the multiple sources of evidence ensured that multiple measures of the same phenomenon were utilized. On the other hand, Denzin's (1989) assertion that data triangulation is more expensive than if data was collected from a single source was greatly felt. It is clear that less effort and resources would have been utilized had the researcher only focused on either document analysis or interviews in gathering the data.

According to Yin (2003), to make sure that any inquiry is internally valid, a number of considerations need to be taken into account. These include doing explanation building as well as the addressing of rival explanations. It therefore follows that in some instances where the

researcher was presented with raw data, he had to generate explanations from such data being informed by a number of factors that surrounded the issue. If for example it was established that less black people were participating in online deliberations, one possible explanation for this would be attributing it to the historical conditions under apartheid that disempowered them in every way – a situation that has not been completely solved right up to now.

In terms of rival explanations, it is possible that two opposing statements may be got from two different interviewees or one from a questionnaire and the other one from an interview. To come up with a single explanation from these two requires one to consider possible interviewee biases and why a particular interviewee would attribute a particular phenomenon to one factor not the other, for example. This kind of triangulation of issues ensures that the researcher achieves internal validity of the research process.

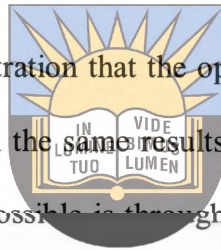


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Establishing the domain to which the study's findings can be generalized constitutes the external validity of any research study (Yin, 2003). Although data was collected only in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality, the results of the research could as well be generalized onto other South African local municipalities with more or less similar conditions as the NMBM. This may however not be easy given that this study is qualitative in nature. One example that could be used to compare and contrast the NMBM's e-governance programme is located in the Western Cape provincial government. The Western Cape government has come up with an initiative designed to make government services available and accessible online through the Cape Gateway Project

(Vosloo and Van Belle, 2006). Although this phenomenon has not been widely adopted by municipalities across the whole of South Africa, there are still isolated cases where plans are underway to fully implement e-governance especially in Gauteng Province which is the economic harbour of the country. The use of replication logic in multiple-case studies as ascertained by Yin (2003) could not be applied in this study since it was only one case that was under scrutiny.

The reliability of a study entails a demonstration that the operations of a study such as the data collection procedures can be repeated with the same results at the end (Robson, 2002). One of the ways to ensure that this procedure is possible is through the use of a case study protocol. A case study protocol will ensure that any reader of the case study results may be able to follow the same procedure to conduct the same research and possibly come up with similar results. In this research, the researcher documented almost every step that was followed in the data collection including the kind of questions asked and the documents read. It therefore follows that anyone who may wish to redo the research may find it easy since they can easily refer to the written research protocol in the form of the proposal and other sections of the report where procedures were outlined.



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## 5.2.1 In-depth Semi-Structured Interviews

Although the case study approach allows for both qualitative and quantitative techniques, only the former research paradigm was utilized. More specifically, the techniques used included in-depth face-to-face interviews, desktop research as well as document analysis.

Separate interviews had been scheduled with the municipal authorities. They were however later turned to be only two interview sessions. These semi-structured interviews with the NMBM authorities were conducted on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July 2009. Specific people interviewed included the webmaster; Ms Didi van Heerden (who was interviewed alone), the Director of Communications (Mr. Rolland Williams) who was interviewed together with a panel of Information Technology experts and members of a team that deals with public communication campaigns in the municipality. The first interview was a bit more of a practical lesson than an interview from the webmaster. She took her time to show the interviewer everything that he needed to know about the website. The second session was more inclined to a focus group discussion except that each interviewee spoke only after the interviewer had asked a question directly falling in their responsibilities.

The use of semi-structured interviews was done to ensure that the interviewer would not keep as far as possible to the previously formulated questions contained in the interview guide. Huysamen (1994) argues that this technique works to prevent different interviewers from collecting information that is not comparable. In this case, this was meant to prevent the same

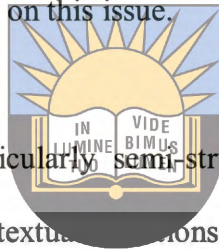


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interviewer from collecting information from different interviewees that would not be eventually comparable.

The identified municipal authorities were selected as key informants on account of their positions and experience. It was taken that since they formed part of the initiators and implementers of the e-governance programme in the municipality, then they had more information and insights than other municipal authorities who did not deal directly with citizens.

They then would be better able to articulate on this issue.



Seale (2004) argues that interviews particularly semi-structured ones; allow for flexibility, greater depth and are more sensitive to contextual variations in meaning. The use of this research technique therefore ensured that there were always avenues for the discovery of new knowledge through the elaborations that were not fixed to pre-planned techniques as in questionnaires for example.

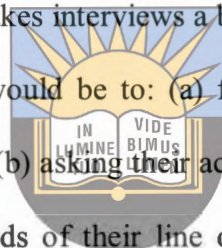
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Although the distribution of questionnaires to the NMBM residents could have brought about better triangulation as Denzin (1989) postulates, the limited time and financial resources could not allow for this. Consequently, only data triangulation was achieved while methodological triangulation was limited. The former entails the use of more than one method of data collection while the latter is about combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. Robson (2002) ascertains that both data and methodological triangulation help in countering all of the threats to validity.

The same triangulation has its own weaknesses however, which include the opening up of possibilities for discrepancies and disagreements among the different sources. It is however important to note that the citizens' voices were catered for during the in-depth interviews conducted with them.

Rubin and Rubin (1985) as quoted by Yin (2003) assert that although the researcher will be pursuing a consistent line of enquiry in an interview, he/she should ensure that the stream of questions is fluid rather than rigid. This makes interviews a bit more flexible hence the job of the researcher within an interview scenario would be to: (a) follow their own line of enquiry as reflected by their case study protocol, and (b) asking their actual (conversational) questions in an unbiased manner that also serves the needs of their line of enquiry (Yin, 2003). It therefore follows that the interviews done in this study were open-ended in nature. Respondents were asked questions about the different facets of the e-government discourse in the NMBM for example, as well as their personal opinions on the matter. This kind of assistance from the interviewees made them play more of "informant" roles rather than "respondents."

The advantages of individual interviews are that the interviewer has more control, and each respondent has a greater chance of conveying his or her point of view than in group interviews (Morgan 1997: 10). Paradoxically though, group interviews can have the advantage over individual interviews in that the group interaction can provoke discussion in a way that an individual interview cannot. Focus groups could therefore have enhanced the quality of the discussions within the interactions with citizens, but it was going to be a mammoth task to get the respondents together since the population was widely spaced.



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Even when using ‘open’ questions, which means the interviewer has less control than if only ‘closed’ questions are used, probes and prompts are necessary (Gillham 2000: 45). Probes, a key interviewing skill, are supplementary questions to clarify or extend the response, while prompts encourage respondents to answer or remind them of points they have not mentioned (Gillham 2000: 14, Fielding 1993: 140). However, it has been noted that inexperienced interviewers tend to work uncompromisingly from a prepared list of questions, and the researcher found that he became more skillful at deviating from his list of questions to pursue interesting points as the interviews progressed. In some cases, probing and prompting would lead to discussions on relevant issues that the interviewer had not anticipated when designing the interview guide. Probing and prompting are definitely skills best learned through practice as Fielding (1993: 141) asserts.

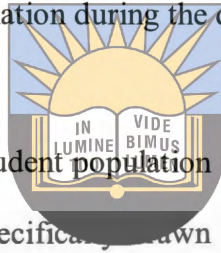


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Each interview conducted was taped using a tape recorder. This was done because the interviews were not precisely standardized and data would have been lost without taping. Furthermore, if the researcher had paused every few seconds to write down interviewees’ responses, the interaction would have been “stilted and peculiar” (Fielding, 1993: 146). Because the samples were relatively small and the interviews short, it was easy for the researcher to transcribe every interview verbatim.

Jensen (1982) has noted that in-depth interviewing “with its affinities to conversation, may be well suited to tap social agents’ perspective on the media.” He points out that spoken language remains a primary and familiar mode of social interaction and one that people habitually relate to

the technological media. Similarly, Bryman (1988) argues that the semi-structured interviewing method is useful, as it requires the researcher to show minimal guidance and allows considerable latitude for interviewees to express themselves freely. In line with this interviewing technique, the researcher operated within a loose collection of themes. In this way, he allowed his interviewees free rein during the interviews. However, there are moments, as Bryman has noted, where the interviewees did 'ramble'. These ramblings were considered to be constructive to the study, since they revealed something about the interviewees' concerns and showed the perspective of the citizens providing information during the data gathering process.



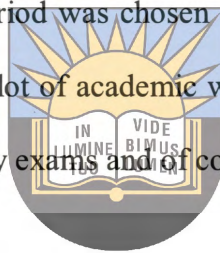
Interviews were also conducted with the student population of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU). The sample was specifically drawn from those students who originally resided in the city of Port Elizabeth so that their own experience with the NMBM website and e-governance in general would be established. An anonymous source was contacted within the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) who helped identify students who originally came from the Port Elizabeth area. Using Microsoft access databases, it was also easy to locate exactly where these individuals were currently residing specifically on campus and around central city. This small population was selected because it was going to be easier to visit them one by one on campus and they also had better access to the Internet while on campus.

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A computer software programme called Random Number Generator Pro was then used to come up with twenty random numbers which were then used to select people on the database that were going to be interviewed. Each selected individual was first telephonically contacted to make an appointment. Getting the flat numbers and extension lines was also made possible through the

use of the same databases especially of postgraduate students. With the undergraduates who stayed in university flats that had no landline telephone extensions, appointments had to be made face to face after visiting them in their rooms, but the majority of them were quick to tell the researcher to start asking the questions straight away hence there was no need to make appointments.

Interviews with the student population were specifically conducted during the beginning of the second semester of the year 2009. This period was chosen considering that students would just be arriving from their vacations and not a lot of academic work would have piled up except for those who were busy writing supplementary exams and of course postgraduate theses.



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The decision to interview the selected people mentioned above was taken after considering that these office bearers were directly dealing with interactions with the citizens in the municipality hence they were better able to articulate on this issue. On the other hand, the sample of the population was taken from the students studying in the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) who originally resided in the municipality. This population sample was chosen based on the assumption that they had better access to the Internet as compared to the other ordinary residents who were living in the rural parts of the municipality, for example.

### **5.2.2 Document Analysis**

Document analysis was done both during the preliminary stages of the enquiry and during the data collection phase of the research. Babbie (2001) argues that case study researchers, as

opposed to grounded theorists, seek to enter the field with knowledge of the relevant literature before conducting the field research. To effectively do this, Yin (2003: 85) asserts that when the researcher is using document analysis as a research method, the following documents ought to be considered:

- Letters, memoranda, and other communiqués
- Agenda, announcements and minutes of meetings, and other written reports of events
- Administrative documents – proposals, progress reports, and other internal records
- Formal studies or evaluations of the same “site” under study
- Newspaper clippings and other articles appearing in the mass media or in community newsletters.

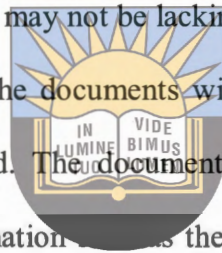


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Several documents containing both the national and the NMBM's local government ICT policies and other related information were acquired online. It however became difficult to get internal files such as agendas, minutes of meetings, memoranda. This was generally so because all the people contacted were reluctant to produce these files as they said the law did not allow them to do so. The researcher tried to go the route of the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) where he was met with the same response hence no progress was done in pursuit of this angle. Although these documents could have shed more light on what was actually being communicated within meetings and communiqués in the government about e-governance, the actual analysis of the e-governance tools like the policy papers and the website made up for the need to acquire them.

To ensure that that the researcher stayed up to date with the communiqués from the municipality, he had to subscribe to the municipal electronic newsletter. This was done from the beginning of the year 2008 right until the end of the year 2009 when the research was concluded. A very few of the internal documents acquired however, were provided by the webmaster. A sample of these communiqués is provided in the appendix of this document.

Yin (2003) admits that although documents listed above may be very useful in the case study approach, they are not always accurate and may not be lacking in bias. During the data collection process therefore, the researcher treated the documents with caution – not accepting them as literal recordings of events that happened. The documents were largely used to corroborate evidence from the other sources of information such as the interviews and what the researcher had acquired from the municipal documents obtained via other means.



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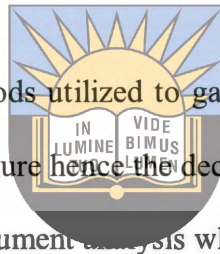
Huysamen (1994) asserts that the unit of analysis in the case study approach does not necessarily have to be human (e.g. an individual, family, community etc) but may also involve personal documents such as diaries or letters. In view of this, the study also utilized quite a number of documents related to e-governance in the NMBM. These included the NMBM communication policy, the municipality's website, online articles (specifically on citizen engagement in the municipality) as well as key national ICT policy documents.

The documents identified (especially the communication policy and communiqués) were mainly utilized to ascertain the authorities' position on the e-governance and participatory communication discourse. When it came to ascertaining the implementation and commitment of

the authorities to these policies however, the key source consulted was the NMBM's website (<http://www.mandelametro.gov.za>). This was so because the website (and e-mails) is the public sphere or platform for electronic interactions between the municipal authorities and the citizens in the area. The website is the "face" of the municipality for it represents the institution on the World Wide Web.

### 5.3 Conclusion

The chapter has set out the research methods utilized to gather the information required. It has shown that the research is qualitative in nature hence the decision to use in-depth semi structured interviews, desktop research as well as document analysis which are all found under the umbrella technique of the case study approach. Data obtained was therefore qualitative in nature as opposed to statistical information which does not explain in detail how a phenomenon operates; or is like. Although statistical information would have been useful in determining how many of the NMBM interviewed residents considered the website interactive for example, the thrust of the study on this aspect was however to identify and analyze those components of the website that made it interactive hence overriding the need for counting the number of people inclined to a particular stance.



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# CHAPTER SIX: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

## 6.1 Introduction

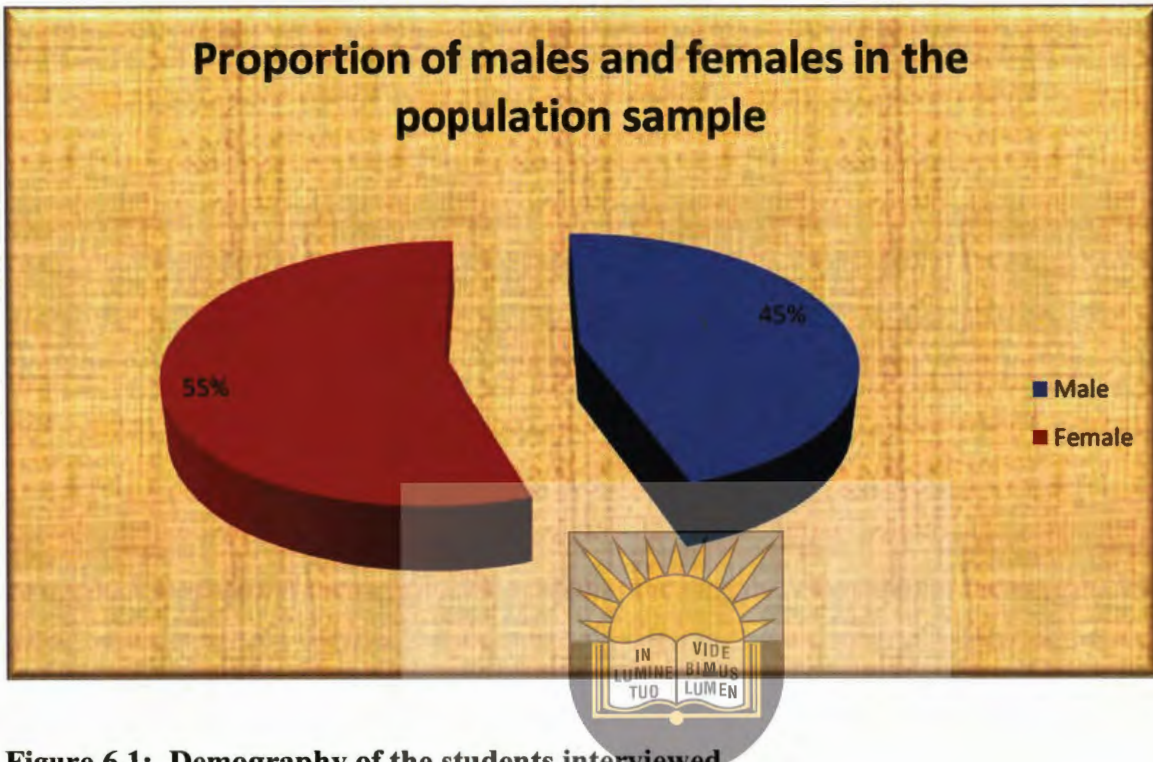
Following the conduction of interviews and document analyses in the NMBM, this chapter was designed to present and interpret the findings of the research. The findings are demarcated into various categories that are meant to ensure that each research question formulated at the beginning of the project is answered.



## 6.2 Demography of Respondents

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It has already been highlighted that interviews were conducted with a number of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipal authorities. They included the communications manager; Mr. R Williams, the webmaster (Ms D van Heerden) as well as a panel of Information Technology experts in the municipality. On the other hand, the profile of the student population interviewed is represented on Figure 6.1. There were twenty students interviewed in total. Nine of them were male and the remaining eleven were female. This ratio was selected given that the male/female ratio in the whole municipality was 48:52 which meant that there were more females than males as indicated in the background to the municipality.



**Figure 6.1: Demography of the students interviewed**

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## **6.3 The NMBM Website as a Public Sphere**

### **6.3.1 Information Dissemination versus Deliberation**

The interviews conducted and the document analysis done have revealed that the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality's website is an example of a public sphere in the contemporary world. This was so because the website was acting as a platform for both the dissemination of information as well as initiating debates. Interviews amongst the student population of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University revealed that residents of the municipality were raising routine governance issues to municipal managers through the use of the website. The issues ranged from water and sewage services, primary health care to elections. These were also dealt with through other platforms like *imbizos*, the *Masithethisane* programme and telephone calls.

Asked whether the municipality website was providing them with a platform to participate in local issues, some interviewees had this to say:

**Elizabeth:** *We now have a platform to present any concerns we have to the municipal authorities...and the authorities also communicate with us via it....*

**Ayanda:** *The site presents a fantastic opportunity for me as a resident to participate in political and social issues, although the traditional platforms seem to be more effective.*



From the two responses above, it is clear that interviewees considered the NMBM website as a public sphere. This is because they have used it to create communication between municipal authorities and the residents as well as amongst the residents themselves. Ayanda however corroborates the argument that the use of ICTs is most likely to remain complementary (rather than a replacement) of traditional tools for public consultation (Arocena and Senker (2003) and the NMBM Communication Policy (2001)).

Information on virtually everything to do with municipal issues and governance was being shared between the authorities and the residents via electronic newsletters, news articles on the website as well as through other traditional means like pamphlets and newspaper articles, for example. This information included water and sewage services, the FIFA World Cup preparations, traffic services and a lot more.

The website however fell short on a number of aspects to fully align with Habermas' conceptualization of the public sphere. Habermas (1997) envisaged the public sphere as providing a diversity of ways of relating one person to others or affecting the mindset and behaviour of individuals. This aspect was however missing in the NMBM's website because the document analysis done identified no platforms like discussion forums and e-communities where individuals could log in and engage in debates on current issues affecting their communities. The students also confirmed that they could not discuss any issues over the website:



**Dan:** *It is not possible to discuss issues over the website because of the lack of a...*

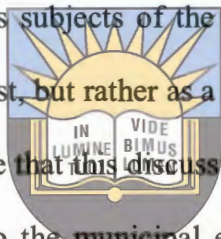
*[Silence] what do you call that...? specific forum designed for that.*

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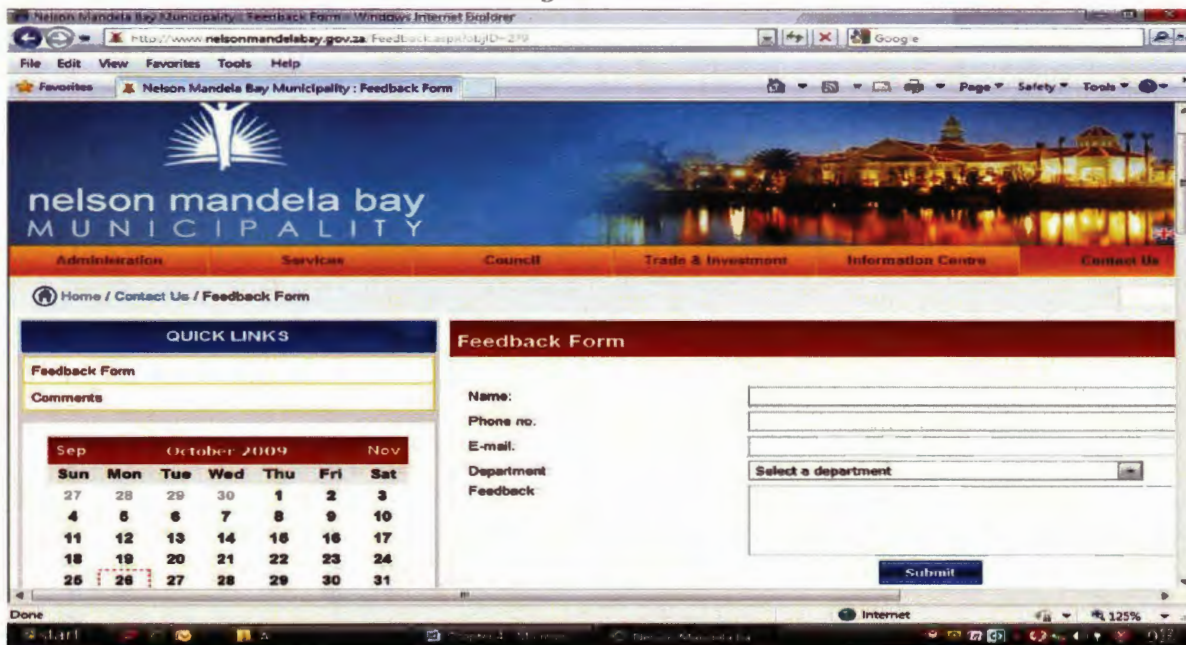
He was of course referring to the absence of discussion forums and e-communities on the NMBM website. The interactivity side of the website was therefore compromised because of the lack of these critical aspects.

On the other hand, two way communications between the municipal authorities and citizens was being made possible through the use of the *feedback form* on the website.

Figure 6.2 is a picture of the *feedback form* taken from the NMBM’s website on the 26<sup>th</sup> of October 2009. A look at the form reveals that this platform was basically meant to gather the browser’s attitude/opinion/suggestion/query etc; on any issue concerning the municipality. The feedback submitted was being directed to the respective departments in the municipality which was then responsible for taking the matter forward (van Heerden, 2009). A much closer look at the form however showed that this platform did not necessarily contribute to the aspect of live engagement and debate. Roderick (1986) in Sinha (1997) envisages the public sphere as enabling citizens to come together “not as subjects of the state or as private economic actors concerned with matters of individual interest, but rather as a free and open public body to discuss matters of general interest.” One may argue that this discussion was not fulfilled on the *feedback form* which basically gave more power to the municipal employees on matters raised by the citizens.

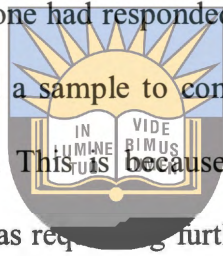


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**Figure 6.2: The feedback form as seen on the NMBM website**

In communication, the sender and the receiver do not have exclusive responsibilities of encoder/decoder in the process. This means that both parties play either of the two roles during the communication process. Citizens of the NMB Municipality would anticipate getting someone to respond back to them after submitting issues via the website. In view of this, van Heerden (2009) elaborated on the events that followed once a submission had been effected on the form. Basically, the message would get directed to the respective department which she termed 'directory'. A tracking system would then provide tracking numbers to see how far the query would have gone and whether or not someone had responded accordingly. From the researcher's experience (which was however too small a sample to come up with a solid conclusion), this system was not being properly managed. This is because it took him over a month before someone responded to his feedback that was requesting further information. The researcher was seeking an appropriate person to make arrangements with regards to data collection for this research. A response was only received after 3 messages had been sent via the feedback form.



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Half of the students interviewed also raised concerns on the amount of time it took before one could be responded to. One student, Ayanda became emotional on this matter. She had this to say about the amount of time it took for her to get someone to respond to her after making a submission:

**Ayanda:** *I wonder why they do have that feature after all coz no one seems to be taking it seriously. I suggest they rather remove it.*

This indicated that commitment to the online platform was one aspect that still needed to be considered for the website to contribute more to debates and a more democratic polity. Attitudes like the one displayed by Ayanda may lead to citizen apathy.

Nevertheless, the idea of getting the sender's e-mail address and cell phone number through the *feedback form* was found to be taking the whole set up into a more inclusive process. It was clear that regardless of the delay, someone would eventually make a follow up call to the sender of the feedback as experienced by the researcher and corroborated by the webmaster. Further discussions and clarity seeking questions would then follow which formed part of the participatory communication discourse, as discussed in the literature review section of this study. If the matter could not be resolved over the phone, appointments with the officials concerned were made so that interpersonal communication could ultimately take place. The *feedback form* therefore initiated the engagement process which would sometimes end up either in telephone conversations or face-to-face discussions.

### **6.3.2 Is Universal Access a Reality**

Quoting Habermas, Keller (1979) identified universal access as one of the pillars of a truly democratic public sphere. Habermas postulated that any citizen who would like to have a contribution on issues of the current conjuncture should have easy access to this public sphere. As was anticipated before data collection, not all citizens of the NMBM had access to the

Internet, not to mention the ability to use it (Williams, 2009). There was however no research identified to provide numbers or statistics on Internet access in the municipality. In general, computers and the Internet are very expensive, making them beyond the reach of the general citizen in the municipality.

**Williams:** *It is a reality that the majority of the population here does not have access to the Internet. We therefore have to use other communication forums to interact with them...*



The above situation places a grey area in Hamilton's (as cited in Vatikiotis, 2005) articulations on alternative media. He conceptualized the distinction between alternative and mass media in terms of *deprofessionalization*, *decapitalization* and *deinstitutionalization*. By this, he meant that ordinary citizens were supposed to get access to the alternative media without the necessity of professional training, without paying a lot of money and this access was supposed to take place in settings other than media institutions or similar systems. Clearly all this had not been achieved within the e-governance discourse of the NMBM.

The communicative power of the citizens was thus being restricted. This goes hand in hand with the assertion that:

a purely online debate would exclude the vast majority of African people, but a multimedia debate, conducted via the web, email, mobile telephony, radio and live events, could become a focal point for a pan-African discussion about priorities for good governance.

(Onyancha, 2007: 67)

This situation was however different from the targeted population sample of students studying in the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU). This specific population had relatively more and easy access to computers and the Internet particularly while at the university's campus. One of the students interviewed (Vitalis), however indicated that Internet access at the university was also limited and one had to use their quota sparingly. "Spending a lot of time on non-academic matters like the downloading of files and public deliberations would therefore be limited," he said. Nevertheless, the students interviewed could access the municipal website and conduct any transactions possible on the platform. This nonetheless, did not make the Internet a fully accessible public sphere in the whole municipality under study.

Habermas' concept of universal access to the public sphere was therefore found to be very limited within the e-governance situation in the NMBM. Broadly speaking, the idea of the Internet is a relatively new phenomenon to the majority of the African population, if not yet known. It is even more difficult to envisage this kind of a population (as explored in the background to the municipality) utilizing Internet technology to conduct debates on issues in

their communities. Because of accessibility challenges and language issues (discussed later in this chapter), the residents would rather prefer to wait for public meetings and *imbizos* to voice out their concerns to the municipal employees/authorities. On the other hand, with the growth of public social networks like *facebook* and their popularity amongst the student population for example, the Internet has the potential to foster debates amongst community members. For this to take place however, more vibrant and ambitious Internet strategies needed to be formulated to ensure that platforms for deliberations were available on the website.



Feenberg (1991) postulates that information provided for the citizens ought to be reliable and representing diverse interest groups. “For knowledge to be taken seriously, the range of interests represented by the actor must be enlarged so as to make it more difficult to offload feedback from the object onto disempowered groups” (pg 54). If accessibility to the Internet was a problem, then Feenberg’s assertion would not be achieved meaning that e-democracy was not gaining the support of all the interest groups in the municipality.

### **6.3.3 Rational Debate over the Website**

The analysis on information dissemination versus deliberation has revealed that basically, the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality’s website did not foster direct engagements among the citizens. It therefore follows that not much can be said under this heading. However, van Heerden (2009) indicated that the majority of the feedback that got directed to her was immensely productive. According to the webmaster, some of the topics that people were writing

on were issues of importance to them for example; traffic fines payment procedures, power cuts, the 2010 world cup preparations, public meetings and many more. Hardly did the webmaster receive nasty feedback or irresponsible material from the citizens over the online platform.

Again the webmaster generalized that online feedback was not being received from a specific group of people like those who were or were not contributing much during the *imbizos* and other face-to-face communications. This assertion did not support research on computer mediated communication that has shown that people behave differently when they communicate via the computer. The research showed that people who often dominate conversations during face to face interactions were less visible in an online situation while users who would contribute little in a face to face meeting tended to use more in computer mediated communication (Sproull and Kiesler, 1997). On the other hand, the situation was in line with Onyancha's (2007) argument that the issues surrounding sociological effects on communication via different media are profound. He postulates that the Internet did not exist independently of the cultural and political environments in which its users live. An Internet user does not become removed from their socio-political environment when they go online. The user thus remained a person living within a family, a political establishment, a society, in an economic situation, a region and so on, interacting with others with different or similar conditions.

Some citizens of the NMBM continued sending constructive messages/feedback even while they were outside the borders of South Africa. According to the webmaster, the majority of this

feedback were contributions on how the municipality could do things better. A discussion on the most visited pages is provided later in this chapter when website hits are scrutinized. In answering to question 12 (See Appendix 1), the webmaster therefore did not agree with the conception that citizens mostly used the Internet as a mechanism for protest or to always instigate complaints to municipal authorities. Consequently, one may argue that with more deliberative platforms, rational debate was therefore possible in participatory communication through the use of the Internet.



### 6.3.4 Is Rank an Issue in Online Communications?

It has been identified that some population groups in societies are dominated by others during public debates under more traditional platforms like meetings and parliamentary sessions (Baiocchi, 1999). On the other hand, participatory communication via electronic means can arguably counter this unfortunate imbalance. All of the twenty students from the NMBM interviewed were happy that they had an opportunity to get their opinions heard through the Internet. They also had the privilege of getting exclusive feedback on issues that they would have raised. This was because it is quite difficult to discriminate or sideline any individual using any biases via electronic means. This is however completely different when it comes to public meetings where only selected people who appeared on the agendas for specific meetings would be allowed to speak. In addition, the Internet provided a platform for relaying information on a 24/7 basis which is more convenient for people. It therefore suffices to argue that rank was not a problematic factor when it comes to online participatory communication in the NMBM.

Almost three quarters of the student population interviewed subscribed to the NMBM's electronic newsletter and anyone else with an e-mail address could easily get the newsletter once they registered to it. This particular service was predominantly information dissemination rather than interactive in nature. Nevertheless, as argued by Kellner (2000), a well informed citizenry is a prerequisite for lively debates to take place. It therefore follows that the newsletter was contributing immensely to the democratic polity within the municipality through information sharing.



Figure 6.3 provides typical examples of e-mails that a subscriber to the NMBM newsletter gets on a regular basis. The topics varied from domestic issues like the repairing of pipelines to more pressing matters like the introduction of water restrictions as well as the land reform. After reading the newsletter, a resident could respond back via e-mail. Scott (2005) quotes Chase and Mulvenon (2002) who argue that e-mail may have the most radical potential of online communication given its nature that is difficult to filter and censor. Any resident of the municipality could therefore send an e-mail that was going to be treated the same way as any other person's. It therefore suffices to note that rank was disregarded in this manner leading to more equal power sharing amongst all the classes of people in the municipality. Such kinds of systems will ensure that there is constant communication amongst all the stakeholders which ultimately and positively impacts on service delivery.

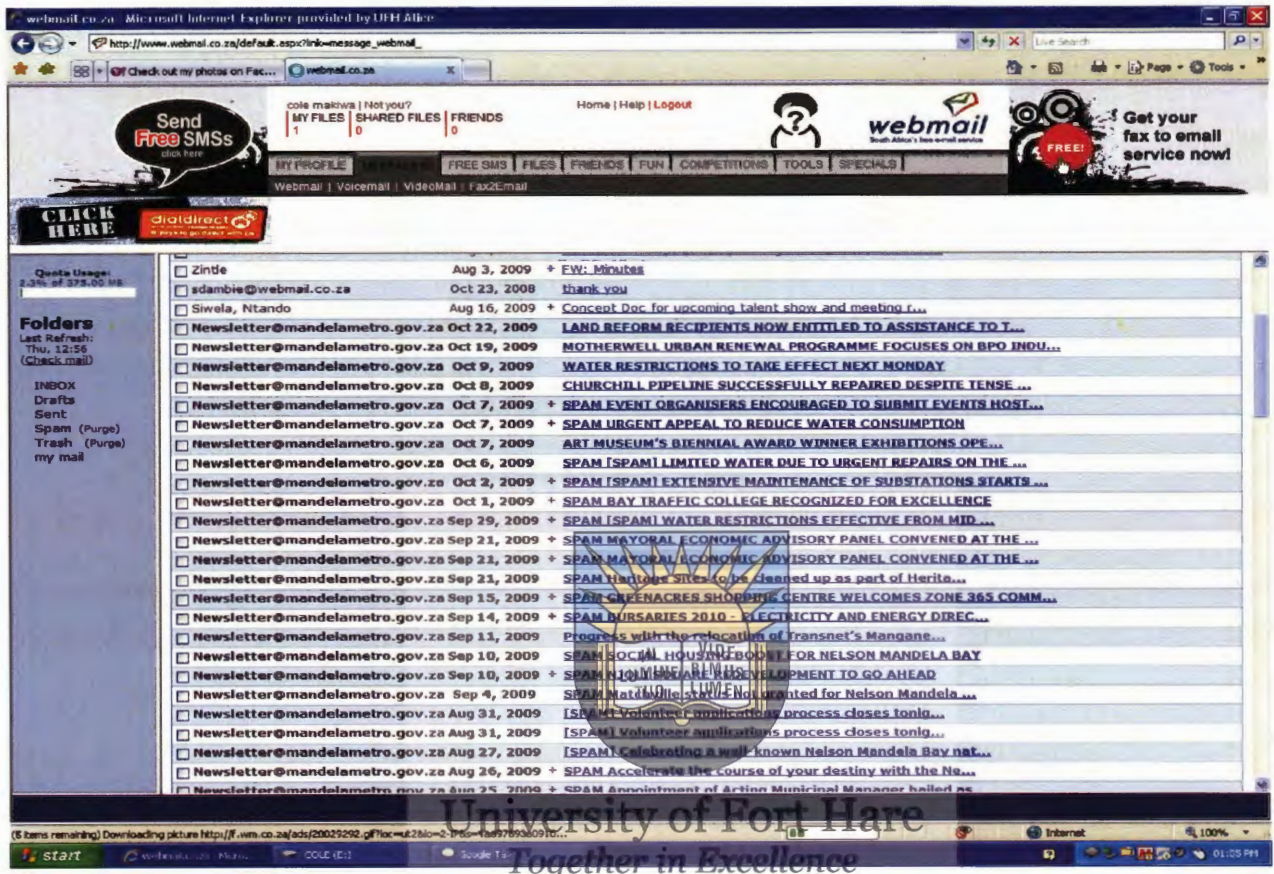


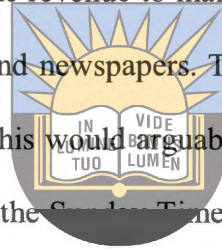
Figure 6.3: Examples of newsletters from the NMBM in the researcher’s webmail inbox

In addition, Onyancha (2007) posits that the Internet (which makes e-governance possible), offers opportunities to promote efficient and effective government. He quotes (Jensen, 2002) who ascertains that e-governance facilitates more accessible government services, allowing greater public access to information, and making government more accountable to citizens. All these benefits were being realized within the NMBM. Local government’s services for example, were easily accessible. Citizens did not have to travel long distances to get application forms for whatever service they required. They could easily go to the link below and download the relevant

forms:

<http://www.nelsonmandelabay.gov.za/Documents.aspx?cmd=browse&catID=8&objID=74>.

Community notices on the website were fostering efficient communication while the vacancies section ensured that the job application process was also less expensive, quick and easy. When it comes to the influences of the market forces, the use of the website for communication becomes outstanding. This is particularly because the revenue to maintain the website did not come from advertisers as is the case with radio, TV and newspapers. There were ultimately less influences of market forces in this online platform. This would arguably help to reduce incidences like the one alluded to before which was between the *Sunday Times* and the former minister of Health, Manto Tshabalala Msimang.

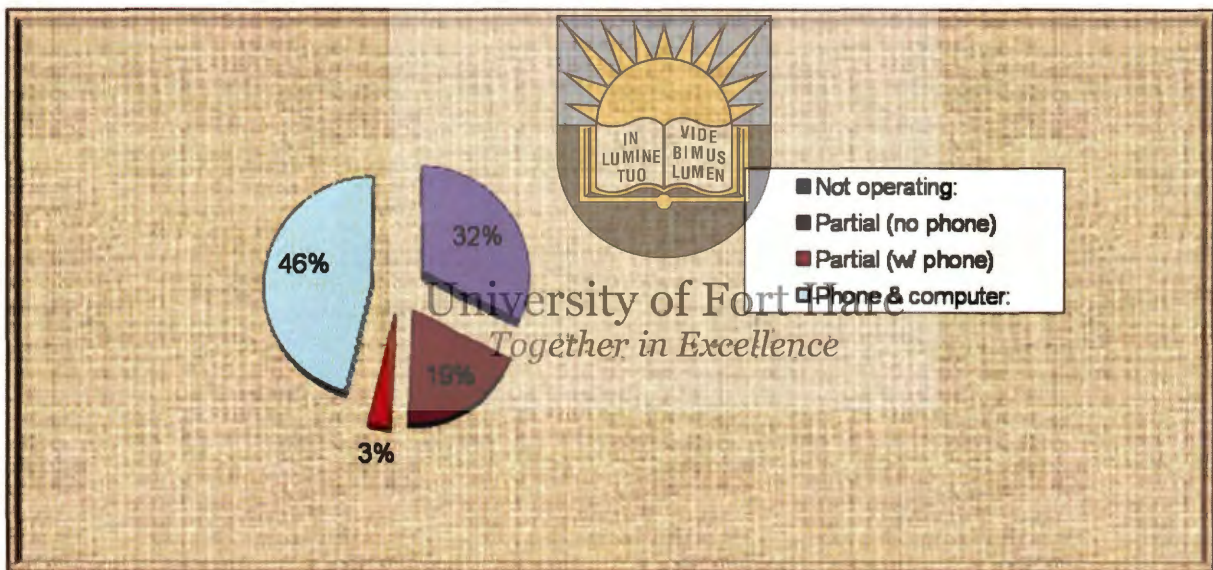


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## 6.4 Government's Commitment to Fostering E-governance

The desktop research revealed that the South African government has invested quite a lot into the ICT sector. A number of telecenters have been established throughout the country focusing more on disadvantaged communities. Benjamin (2003) wrote a small report on his experiences as an employee with the Universal Service Agency (USA) in South Africa. He postulates that the results of telecenter establishment have been mixed. While there has been success in some areas, there have been a lot of challenges on the others.

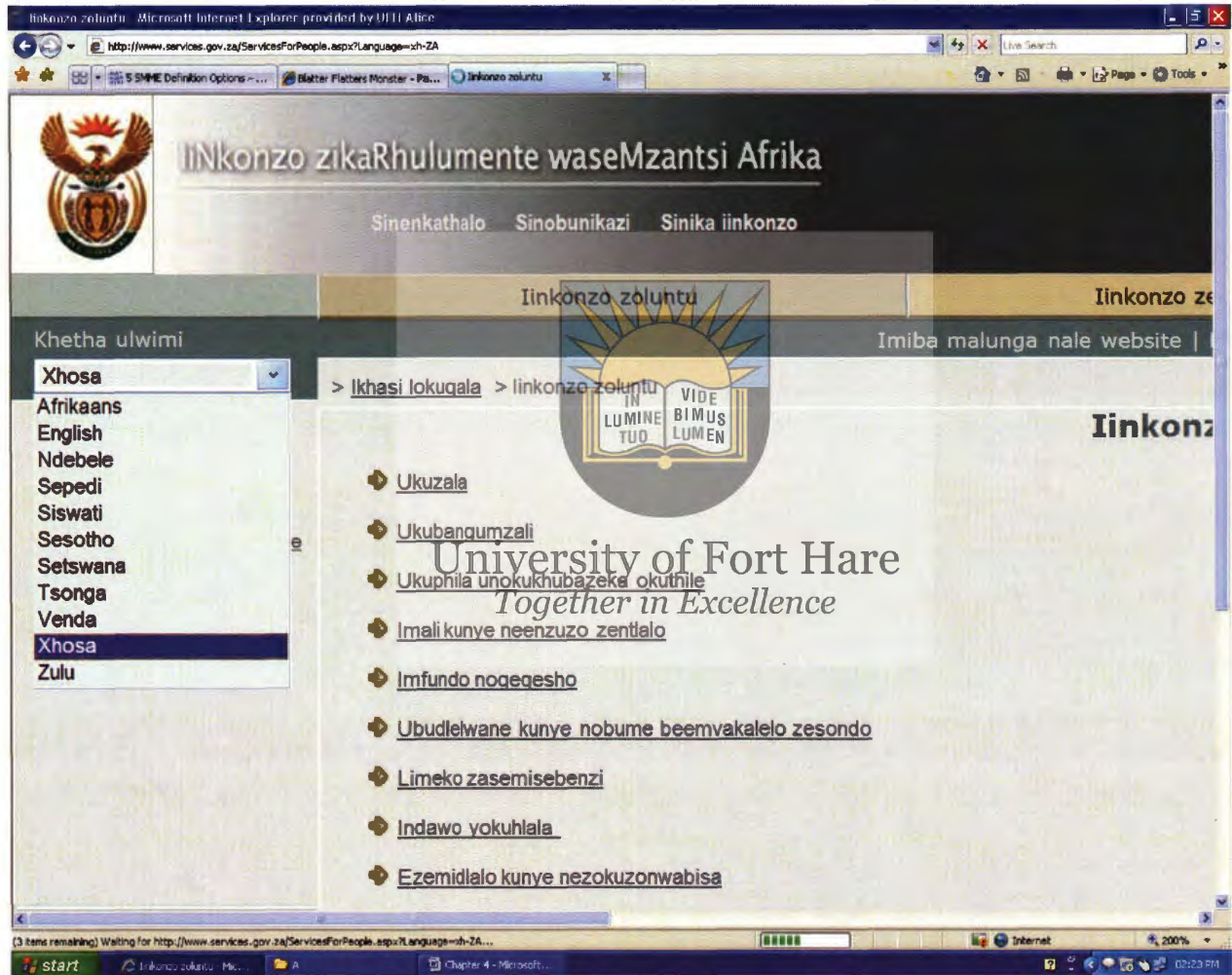
In Figure 6.4, Benjamin was indicating the state of affairs of all the 65 established telecenters in South Africa. Although the majority of these centers were fully operational (46%), it was however worrying to discover that more than half of all the telecenters were experiencing problems, sometimes very severe to the extent of closing down. Telecenters have great potential to improve participatory communication in the NMBM since they are affordable and easily accessible to the local people.



**Figure 6.4: Operating status of the 65 USA Telecenters**

Following the NEPAD agreements on the necessity of e-governance in Africa, the South African national government has been doing its best to implement ideas from this forum. On a national level, the government had managed to establish an excellent website that dealt with all issues to do with governance in the country. It is found on the following Uniform Resource Locator (URL) [www.sa.gov.za](http://www.sa.gov.za). It contains links to all the various government services, departments and institutions. The website has a feature that allows the browser to view the same documents in all

the eleven official languages in South Africa as shown in Figure 6.5. This was a demonstration to the kind of commitment the government had in ensuring that e-governance did not discriminate on the basis of language.



6.5: A web page in Xhosa found in the South African government online website

At the municipal level, a lot of work was in progress in ensuring that the implementation of the municipal websites throughout the country was a success. In the Eastern Cape for example, Mr. Charles Mabuza was appointed as the director for Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as well as the Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs). At the time of data

collection, he was engaging with different municipalities in the province on the *municipal website programme*. Among several objectives, the programme aimed at

facilitating a co-ordinated implementation of municipality websites to provide consistent provision of information between citizens and local communities as well as to provide a user-friendly communication and transaction channel between government and society



(Mabuza, 2008:10).

The government was also driving a massive campaign amongst the youth to make them participate in the Information Society and Knowledge Economy. In addition to the *municipal website programme*, documents and booklets in possession of the researcher indicated that there was also the *e-literacy programme for the youth* as well as the Youth Information Society and Development (ISAD) Programme. Both were meant to ensure that the youth participated more in issues about governance and entrepreneurship through the use of ICTs.

Appendix 5 gives an example of a report on a workshop held in East London on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 2008. With the support of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), local municipalities were being urged to implement the above objectives. From the report that the NMBM's webmaster compiled, her municipality was well ahead of this initiative

which was the main reason why it was chosen as the case study for this research. More research however needs to be conducted to monitor the progress of the initiative. In summation, it is clear that the South African government, both at the national and local level, was dedicated to ensuring that e-governance becomes a reality in the country. The NMBM can be regarded as among the leading municipalities in this project.

## 6.5 Language as a Barrier to Effective Communication

Language is arguably one of the sticking points when it comes to e-governance in South Africa and the rest of the African continent in general. In a country that has eleven official languages, the chances of opening a website that was predominantly designed in any one of the eleven official languages except English were generally very slim. Again, the use of the Internet in sub-Saharan Africa was restricted by “socio-cultural factors (Nyamnjoh, 1999), of which illiteracy (61% in sub-Saharan Africa) and language limitations (non-English readers 11%) are specifically salient” (Wasserman and de Beer, 2004: 71). As anticipated, the NMBM’s website was designed in English and this language dominated all the communication transactions on it. None of the interviewees had a problem with an English website.

**Sisanda:** *I do not have any problem with the use of English language on the website although someone out there in the townships will certainly do.*

It is therefore assumed that the language issue could have come out strongly had the research included any other general citizen in the municipality other than the students. This is so given the profile of the municipality's population. This is an area that might be interesting for further research.

Municipal authorities interviewed did not however regard English as creating a barrier to effective communication in the case study. This was because normally, anyone with the capacity to operate a computer was assumed to have quite a clear understanding of the English language. Again, van Heerden (2009) argued that e-governance and the Internet were not the only platforms for citizens to air their views hence the language aspect would easily be dealt with in other forums like *imbizos* for example. This supports the view that the Internet should not be utilized in isolation, but in conjunction with other traditional platforms.



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Nevertheless, because this study focused on e-governance and its feasibility and effectiveness in the area, the researcher had to probe more questions on this specific area regarding language in the e-governance discourse. The webmaster then drew attention to the translation feature on the website which itself was relatively new on the website. Figure 6.6 is a picture of the website that draws attention to the language translation feature. The feature basically gave browsers an opportunity to view web pages and documents in French, Italian, Dutch, Spanish, and Portuguese. Still, the researcher was not convinced because these were not local South African languages.



**Figure 6.6: Extract showing the language translation feature on the NMBM website**

The feature was therefore not working for the best interests of the local citizens in the municipality. It rather catered for local minorities who understood these languages as well as prospective tourists seeking for information about the city of Port Elizabeth. In view of this, Coleman's (2006) assertion that e-governance has brought about freer flow of information between government and citizens as well as opportunities for citizens to participate more directly in policy development; was not being fully experienced in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality because of the language factor. Municipal authorities therefore need to take language issues into consideration when designing e-governance policies in their jurisdictions.

## 6.6 An Analysis of some Critical Features on the Website

In a study conducted by Onyancha (2007) on Eastern and Southern African government websites, the author used the following criteria to assess the different websites: feedback forms, contact information, sitemap, and search engines/options. All these criteria did apply to the NMB Municipality's website. The *feedback form* has already been dealt with previously and it has been found that it was enhancing two-way flow of information within the municipality.



On the municipal website, it was very easy to find contact details of any office occupant/bearer within the municipality under the *Contact us* page. These details included e-mail addresses, physical and postal addresses as well as telephone and fax numbers. Jonathan, one of the interviewees buttressed this assertion when he said that “I find it so easy to navigate through the website. I can’t complain that there is any area that I find difficult to get to.” Correspondences with these office bearers were therefore easy, given that their contact details were available.

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In addition, a lot of maps were available on the website to give directions to people who were unfamiliar with the environment. There were GIS mappings as well as the maps and directions buttons on the home page of the website. There was a map, for example, showing directions of the route from the city's airport all the way to the Kwantu Towers where the local municipal offices were located.

Just like the majority of public institutions' websites, the NMBM's website also provided a search facility for people who might be looking for further information. Rather than browsing the whole website looking for a specific link, one could easily use the search facility to quickly direct them to the exact information being searched for.

Both the interviews and document analysis done revealed that NMBM's website was very informative. Almost any issue that a citizen would want to get further information was dealt with on the platform. There was information about all the municipal services provided, the issue of HIV/AIDS was also dealt with, tourism as well as information/tips for teenagers was easily available. One would therefore not hesitate to conclude that this public sphere was highly informative and tried by all means to incorporate various stakeholders' interests.



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## **6.7 Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation of the Online Platform**

Within the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) framework, the United Nations' former Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, argued that good governance is "perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development" (UNDP, 2002: 51). Given that African Heads of States do agree that e-governance provides an avenue to achieve this, Internet strategies therefore need to be carefully planned, monitored and evaluated for them to attain the intended objectives. This however was established as one of the major weaknesses within the NMB Municipality. None of the municipal authorities interviewed managed to

provide a blue print of how they actually wanted their e-governance project to run. The only explanation to this was that there were no e-governance strategic plans in black and white. This corroborates Waiswa's (2006) assertion that the mere ownership of a web site does not mean effective e-governance.

On the other hand, one could easily see that the intention to incorporate citizens in debates was unquestionably there in the NMBM. This was evident in the municipality's communication policy as quoted at the beginning of this research where the aim was to encourage a culture of citizen participation in local governance (NMBM Communication Policy, 2001). A critical lack of research on the effectiveness of the e-governance approach was unfortunately identified. The following extract from an interview buttressed this assertion:



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**Interviewer:** *How often do you respond to research on any aspect on the website?*

**Jonathan:** *I don't recall ever coming across any questionnaire or a set of interview questions with regards to the website. In fact, I don't think there ever was any.*

With no research and strategic planning; monitoring and evaluation become of no use because there will not be any basis to determine whether or not the programme was on course. Consequently, the lack of training and proper identification of skills required to make the system a success will further derail the process. One may therefore easily deduce that the adoption of the e-governance strategy in the municipality might have been done with the mentality that since other institutions were utilizing websites then they also had to do the same.

On a positive note however, the website was being frequently updated. Throughout the duration of this research, the website was being monitored to find out if anyone was giving attention to it on a regular basis. One of the respondents, Vitalis had this to say on the frequency of updating the website:

**Vitalis:** *I like the fact that they are always busy working on the face of the website to give it a funky and different look on a regular basis.*



Indeed, the municipality was serious with the power of the website in the communication process. The website was launched in the year 2005 to “enhance two-way communication with the residents” (van Heerden, 2009). Van Heerden was only employed in the year 2009 as a full time webmaster and she had made several updates to the look and functionality of the website. During the July interview with her, the researcher had the privilege of getting to see the new look of the website before it was launched in September 2009.

Major revamps to the website were now going to be done once every year and a half (van Heerden, 2009). The webmaster indicated that she now had total control of the website which was not the situation before she came on board. She indicated that she was in the process of creating a new site specifically meant for the 2010 FIFA World Cup competitions to be held in South Africa. Two months after the interview, the NMBM’s website had been revamped and it now had a site for the 2010 games as Figure 6.7 demonstrates.

A lot of finance and other resources were also being invested into the running of the NMBM website. According to van Heerden (2009), about R64 000 was being spent annually for bandwidth only. A further R200 000 per month was being spent for the service contract which however was not clearly elaborated on. In view of these expenses, one may clearly see that there was massive commitment in ensuring that the website continued to exist.

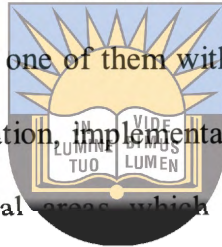
All this good work came as a result of the municipality having to shift from hiring private companies to do the designing and updating of the website to employing a fulltime webmaster. This has also ensured that there is a concentrated effort in the functioning of the website just like any department in the organization was being run.



Figure 6.7: The 2010 site on the NMBM website

## 6.8 Developmental Stage of E-governance in the NMBM

Using Table 4.1, document analysis has managed to shed more light on the stage of the e-governance developmental progress in the NMB Municipality. Macintosh (2006) developed a model that outlined the major characteristics of an online public participation platform in various stages of policy making and development. He identified five stages in the policy-making process as well as features that characterized each one of them within the e-governance discourse. The stages are agenda setting, analysis, formulation, implementation, and monitoring. Assessment of these criteria was based on three critical areas which are information, consultation, and participation. Results of this research demonstrated that the NMBM case incorporated bits and pieces of each and every stage as discussed by Macintosh. Whilst the website was performing very well under the first two areas, the big disparity was however realized when it came to the third area i.e. participation. The website will now be examined using Macintosh's three areas.



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### 6.8.1 Information

In terms of information sharing, both document analysis and interviews pointed to the fact that the NMB Municipality's website was doing excellently well. This was because of the presence of the following features: e-mail alerts, e-mail newsletters, online feedback as well as online publication of annual reports. Sheilla, one of the respondents, indicated that the NMBM's website had become a source of information on almost everything she needed information on

within the municipality. Using the information criterion alone could not shed more light in trying to locate the stage of e-governance in the NMBM. This is because the website was fulfilling all the criteria under each of the five developmental stages of the process i.e. agenda setting, analysis, formulation, implementation, and monitoring.

Stage in policy making cycle	Information	Consultation	Participation
Agenda-setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site-specific search engines</li> <li>• E-mail alerts for new policy issues</li> <li>• Translation support for several languages</li> <li>• Style checkers to remove jargon</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online surveys and opinion polls</li> <li>• Discussion forums</li> <li>• Monitoring e-mails</li> <li>• Bulletin boards</li> <li>• Frequently asked questions (FAQs)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E-communities</li> <li>• E-petitions</li> <li>• E-referenda</li> </ul>
Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translation support for ethnic languages</li> <li>• Style checkers to remove jargon</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence managed facilities</li> <li>• Expert profiling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electronic citizen juries</li> <li>• E-communities</li> </ul>
Formulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advanced style checking to help interpret technical and legal terms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion forums</li> <li>• Online citizen juries</li> <li>• E-community tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E-petitions</li> <li>• E-referenda amending legislation</li> </ul>
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural language style checkers</li> <li>• E-mail newsletters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion forums</li> <li>• Online citizen juries</li> <li>• E-community tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E-mail distribution lists for target groups</li> </ul>

## Monitoring

- Online feedback
- Online publication of annual reports
- Online surveys and opinion polls
- Discussion forums
- Monitoring e-mails
- Bulletin boards
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- E-petitions
- E-referenda

**Table 6.1: Tools for online engagement at each stage of policy-making. Source: Macintosh**

(2006).

### 6.8.2 Consultation



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Consultations via the website and other electronic platforms in the NMBM were widespread. The document analysis revealed that online surveys and opinion polls were being conducted regularly on latest matters of the day. To view the opinion polls archive, one would get to the following link: <http://www.nelsonmandelabay.gov.za/Polls.aspx>. Anyone could vote on the issue of the day. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of October 2009 for example, the poll on the website was about who the people preferred as the next coach for the South African national soccer team after the departure of Mr. Santana. On the other hand, there were no discussion forums, bulletin boards, online citizen juries, and other e-community tools. Because of the lack of these crucial features, the website therefore failed to meet the majority of the criteria set by Macintosh in this segment.

### 6.8.3 Participation

This is one of the criteria where the NMBM's website was found wanting. The website did not have any of the following features that Macintosh (2006) argued would make it fully participatory: e-petitions, e-referenda amending legislation, as well as electronic citizen juries. Data collection here was predominantly document analysis since it was all about establishing whether or not the website had the above mentioned features hence there was no need to corroborate it with the data from interviews. It therefore follows that e-governance in the NMBM was still at its infant stage whereby it was being dominated by massive information dissemination at the expense of wide deliberations and active participation by the citizens. E-governance in the NMBM had definitely passed Macintosh's information phase. It was now struggling within the consultation stage, but it was evidently clear that a lot of work still needed to be done before the participation stage was realized.



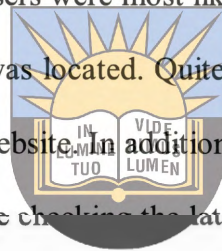
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## 6.9 An Analysis of the NMBM's Website Hits

The term *website hits* is used here to refer to the statistics of the profiles, numbers and trends of website browsers. It is quite usual that one would anticipate the majority of the NMBM website's visitors to be originating from the local municipality itself. This is the case when one looks at the pie chart in appendix 4 (provided by the NMBM webmaster). The blue data point on the chart represents the majority of the website browsers (39.9%) and they are from South Africa. The logical explanation for this state of affairs is that these browsers were the most affected

stakeholders given that the website was for a local municipality. It therefore specifically addressed local governmental issues in the republic which is clearly not the case with a global institution like the United Nations' website for example.

The Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality's website also received a lot of hits from the United States of America. The country had the second highest number of browsers according to the municipality's July, 2009 hits. These browsers were most likely to be potential tourists to the city of Port Elizabeth where the municipality was located. Quite a number of people from Mauritius and the United Kingdom also visited the website. In addition to tourists, these visitors could well be South Africans in the diaspora who were checking the latest developments in their home town and country. Again, because of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, a large number of hits were expected from abroad given that Port Elizabeth is one of the cities to host the games.



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The United Kingdom, Germany and China had a sizeable number of web browsers visiting the NMBM's website. They each had 1.79%, 1.69% and 1.27% respectively. The rest of the countries had less than 1% each of the total number of visitors. Figure 6.8 is a line graph representing different parts of the world where people visited the NMBM website from. Although the percentages for the majority of countries seem insignificant on the graph, the actual numbers are quite high. Sweden for example, had a total of 2 830 in real numbers which only amounted to 0.25% of the total browsers. Czechia had the least number of visitors i.e. 457 which amounted to 0.03% of the total number of people who visited the website at this time.



Figure 6.8: NMBM website browsers by country



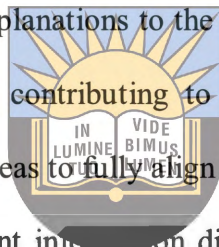
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This research also went on to look at the most popular web pages visited on the website. This was done to figure out whether or not the citizens were utilizing the feedback and other interactive platforms to participate in issues affecting them. The most popular web page was of course the *home page*. It had 1 565 387 hits and the number of visitors was 487 490. Other links relevant to this study were the *vacancies* and *documents* pages that were not very far behind the *home page*. They lay on the fourth and fifth places respectively. The *events*, *notices*, *news*, *newsletter* and the *feedback form* pages were within the top 25 out of a total of 50 pages. It is sufficient to argue that citizens were realizing the importance of interacting with the municipal authorities via the website. This also buttresses the earlier assertion that the website was rich in information which the citizens were making use of. They were focusing less on crossword puzzles and concentrating on critical aspects of the website which painted a very positive picture on the contribution of the website to the system of local governance. The puzzles were on

number 47 out of the 50 pages visited. This is not to say puzzles were not important, but they definitely fell outside what was considered essential in people's daily lives. All the above attest to the fact that there was a considerable degree of citizen interaction over the NMB's website although more needed to be done to make it fully deliberative in nature.

## 6.10 Conclusion

The chapter sought to present and offer explanations to the findings of the research. It has been identified that although the website was contributing to a more participatory polity in the municipality, it fell short on a number of areas to fully align with Habermas' notion of the public sphere. The website was fostering excellent information dissemination and sharing among the different stakeholders in the municipality. Electronic newsletters and the *feedback form* are just but a few of the features identified which enhanced two-way flow of information between authorities and the general citizen. However, the lack of discussion forums, e-communities and electronic citizen juries compromised the effectiveness of the website in contributing to democratic engagements. At the end of the day, results indicated that e-governance had a huge potential to change the way local government was being run. Citizens found satisfaction in making their voices heard in these online platforms. The feedback that was being received was indicating to a mature and responsible citizenry that dealt with fundamental issues rather than using the platform for petty issues. With the demonstrated South African government's commitment to e-governance, challenges like accessibility and language issues have been dealt with thus paving way for a truly democratic public sphere in the form of the Internet.



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# CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter sums up the whole study by drawing the main conclusions and providing recommendations in the e-governance discourse. In the drafting of the conclusions, focus was concentrated on the main research objectives since these were directing the course of the study. On the other hand, lessons were mainly drawn from experiences of institutions or case studies that have undergone the process of implementing e-governance in their respective spheres of influence.



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## 7.2 Main Conclusions

### 7.2.1 Interactivity of the Website

Although good intentions to make e-governance participatory in nature were clearly evident within the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality (NMBM), a lot of work still needed to be done to evolve the system from e-information to e-consultation and e-deliberation. The municipality's website contained a lot of features for the dissemination and sharing of information. These features included e-newsletters, the feedback form, e-publication of annual reports as well as a lot of links to other useful sites. It however lacked critical aspects for the citizens to actively engage in debates and fully participate in the policy-making process within the municipality. The

absence of discussion forums, e-communities and e-petitions were particularly picked out as the main weaknesses of the website in contributing to a more democratic polity. The website and e-governance as a whole, was therefore playing more of an information dissemination role as opposed to enhancing deliberative engagements. For this reason, and the limited accessibility, it was concluded that the website did not fully comply with Habermas' conception of the public sphere.

### 7.2.2 Internet Accessibility for Citizens



Access to the Internet within the municipality was another crucial challenge identified. Without access to the Internet, one would not be able to access the e-portal. Although the student sample of the population selected for interviews had relatively easy access to the Internet, Williams (2009) postulated that this was not the case with the rest of the citizens in the municipality. This buttressed Onyancha's (2007: 31) argument that:

African e-governance faces two additional barriers: the lack of ICT infrastructure and mass connectivity to the internet, and the existence of post-colonial administrative cultures dominated by under-resourced and unaccountable bureaucracies.

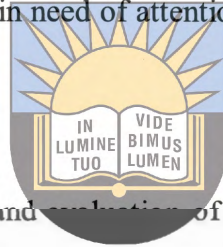
In the same vein, Vosloo and Belle's (2006) study on the Western Cape provincial government has come up with similar results. They argue that while government information and services have become available online, it was not possible to distinguish different categories of users. This was because Internet connectivity in Western Cape was very low. According to them, 10 per cent of the total population had access to the Internet and the province faced relatively high rates of illiteracy. The two researchers concluded that it was hard to demonstrate whether the initiative had strengthened any community participation in the provincial government of the Western Cape.



Good progress was however noted in the national government's efforts to ensure that the Internet was easily accessible to the populace and that e-governance was a reality. This progress was in part, through the installation of telecenters as well as campaigns such as the municipal website programme, the youth e-literacy programme as well as the Youth Information Society and Development (ISAD) Programme. Continuation of this kind of commitment was going to improve the Internet accessibility challenge and further enhance the chances of a healthy democratic establishment in the municipality. In line with this, Vatikiotis (2005) quotes Enzensberger (1974) who distinguished between the *repressive use of the media* (centrally controlled, with one way flow of messages) which promoted passivity, and an *emancipatory use of the media* (decentralized, linking many to many, and fostering interactivity) which ultimately promoted collective mobilization. The latter was the direction that was being adopted within the NMB Municipality.

### 7.2.3 Management of the NMBM Website

A lot of funds were being invested in ensuring the smooth operation of the NMBM's website. The municipality had employed a full time webmaster and thousands of rands were being spent on maintaining the website. It was also being constantly upgraded and a lot of new features introduced. A great level of commitment to the website was therefore being applied although interactivity of the platform was definitely in need of attention.



On the other hand, planning, monitoring and evaluation of the website were critical issues that were lacking in the municipality. **University of Fort Hare** conducted systematic research into the effectiveness of the website in fulfilling its intended aims. *Together in Excellence* It could however be argued that the feedback form was an example of this research for it collected data on how the citizens felt about the website, for example. It is nevertheless important to have a concentrated effort and possibly an outside source to conduct an objective and systematic study about the website so that concrete conclusions are reached and new strategies for better performance are articulated.

### 7.3 Lessons Learnt and Recommendations

The study has revealed that e-governance has the power to contribute to more democratic systems for both national and local government. The Scottish parliament website case (discussed

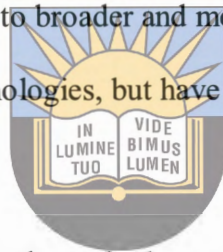
in Chapter 2) has demonstrated that websites have the potential to enhance full participation of citizens in debates of issues relating to governance. In addition to providing access to all the office bearers' contact details and publishing information on parliamentary proceedings, the website allowed citizens to watch the same parliamentary proceedings and get to deliberate on these proceedings. It is therefore recommended here that the NMBM's website provide a similar feature to ensure that the website becomes more interactive.



Given the multilingual nature of South Africa's population, an exclusively English website would definitely not be ideal for every citizen. The national government has managed to pick this challenge up and its website has been tailor-made to counter this. On the SA government online website, one may choose which language to view and download any information or to read anything about the government. This helps to eliminate the language barrier to communication with the website visitors. It is therefore recommended that the same feature be implemented in the NMBM given that there are at least three languages spoken in the municipality i.e. English, Afrikaans and Xhosa (Williams, 2009).

Following the study of the intricacies of e-governance in the NMBM, this study agrees with Riley's (2003) assertion that an effective strategy for African e-governance should avoid the following three key pitfalls:

- i) The adoption of technologies without developing human skills and capacities to manage, integrate and sustain them
- ii) The centralized use of technologies by national government departments, without devolving the benefits of technology to intermediary institutions, such as local government, parliament, parties, civil-society organizations and the independent media
- iii) A failure to link better governance to broader and more inclusive democracy which gives voice to those who cannot afford technologies, but have needs and ideas to express.



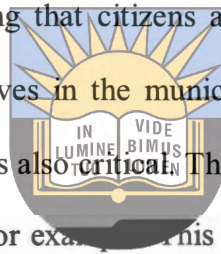
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This study has managed to raise areas where further research was deemed necessary. As indicated before, the issue of the Internet and language still remains a highly contested terrain. It will be interesting to investigate whether or not the local people were utilizing the translation feature on the NMBM website. At the same time, the eleven languages catered for on the national government's website also need to be scrutinized to ascertain whether people were really utilizing this feature. Again, research is critical in the monitoring of the effectiveness of any website in fulfilling the intended objectives of the host institution.

Chitnis' (2005) argument that the consideration of institutional capacity is important before implementing an e-governance programme is also crucial. Research therefore could be directed towards the NMBM's capacity in terms of finance, human resources and technology; to find out if the municipality had the potential to carry out a completely participatory e-governance programme. This corroborates articulations by Riley (2003) who ascertains that early planning is

important to decide on how long the online consultation will be running, who will be responsible for it and how the input received will feed into existing timetables for decision-making.

A successful e-governance programme in the NMBM is a very realistic long-term goal. It is therefore recommended that the municipality gives the website a completely new look with the participatory features like discussion forums and e-communities as discussed before. This will ideally be followed by massive campaigns meant to promote the website. The use of mobile telephony may also be introduced ensuring that citizens are constantly reminded of the wide range of opportunities to express themselves in the municipality. Ensuring that more citizens have access to computers and the Internet is also critical. This means that more resources need to be directed to the erection of telecentres for example. This will no doubt afford the citizens the opportunity to contribute to the policy-making process and thus become better satisfied citizens.



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## 7.4 Conclusion

There is no better way to sum up this study, but to allude to the fourth African Development Forum which was held in Addis Ababa in October 2004. The forum produced a Consensus Statement (which is in full agreement with findings of this study) declaring that:

E-governance ... is an important innovation for enhancing good governance and strengthening the democratic process and can also facilitate access to information, freedom of expression, greater equity, efficiency, productivity growth and social inclusion. Successful e-

government initiatives can have demonstrable and tangible impact on improving citizen participation and quality of life as a result of effective multi-stakeholder partnerships. African governments need to develop appropriate policy frameworks, supported by legislation for e-governance, that are linked to strategic development objectives; enlist high-ranking political e-government champions; focus awareness, outreach and training efforts on the less privileged segment of targeted users, particularly women and neglected rural communities; and promote local content and supports local language development.



Onyancha (2007: 2)

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Both local and national government practices could immensely be improved if only the African governments could stop being rhetoric and start working on statements they make during high summits. E-governance is a reality, but what is needed for it to prosper is the commitment and proper planning just like any other project people engage in.

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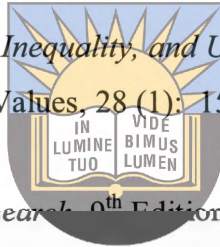
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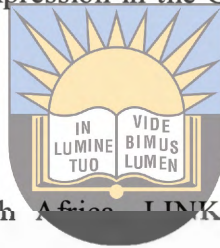
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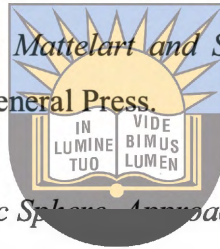
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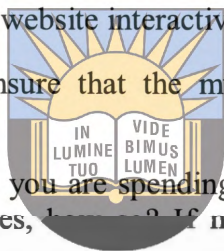
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Twenty more Interviews were conducted with the population sample from the NMMU at various locations within the university on different dates.

## Appendix 1: Interview Questions for the Webmaster

1. How long has the municipality been using the website and have you made any significant changes to its format during the course of history. Why?
2. Why did the municipality adopt the use of a website?
3. What particular audience does the website target and why?
4. May you give me a run down of the services that the municipality offers to its citizens via online means?
5. What role does the municipal website play in the incorporation of citizens in governance and service delivery in general?
6. To what extent do you consider the website interactive?
7. What steps are being taken to ensure that the municipality's website is playing its intended role?
8. Can you tell me how much money you are spending on your website? Do you feel that the website is cost-effective? If yes, how? If no, then why are you continuing to maintain the website?
9. How do you ensure that online feedback from the citizens gets to the intended recipients and that any queries are responded to within a reasonable period of time?
10. How do you co-ordinate with other departments to provide consistency to the image that you want the municipality portrayed?
11. According to your website hits, where do the majority of website browsers come from and in which areas do they spend most of their time and why? Please provide the latest report if possible.
12. There is this view that the www and websites particularly in this case, remains as a mechanism for protest rather than for the acquisition of a more equal power relationship with the dominant forms of organization within society, how do you see it? Do your stakeholders make meaningful contributions over the web page?
13. What are the challenges encountered when trying to involve citizens via online means?
14. Is language a barrier to effective communication via the website? If yes, how so?
15. What do you reckon to be the ideal environment/conditions for full citizen participation especially through online platforms?
16. May you explain for me how the electronic helpdesk works



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17. Any examples of memos, letters, minutes of meetings, proposals or progress reports etc related to e-governance that you may provide for me?

NB: These were semi-structured interviews so there was room for probing and making follow-ups on interesting/relevant lines of experience.



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## **Appendix 2: Interview Questions for Communication Managers and Policy-Formulators.**

- What are the different ways in which you include citizen participation in your communication strategy?
- How does the notion of e-democracy feature into the way you interact with the citizens of your municipality?
- To what extent do citizens participate in debates, lodge complaints and enquiries via online platforms? How is this compared to other traditional ways available?
- How does the government (both at national and local level) assist in ensuring that the use of ICTs especially the Internet in governance is a reality?
- What do you reckon to be the ideal environment/conditions for full citizen participation especially through online platforms?
- What kind of evaluative strategies do you utilize to determine the effectiveness of your public participation strategies including the website's effectiveness?
- How do you make sure that the general citizen's views/opinions are incorporated into the decision making process of the municipality?
- Who decides on the suitability/relevance of these inputs and on what basis do they do this? Just give me a brief outline of the whole process.
- What are the challenges encountered when trying to involve citizens via online means?
- How would you imagine Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) making democracy and service delivery better than it is right now?
- How is language a factor in the democratic processes within a municipality, and how can you ensure that this does not hinder the effective use of the Internet in citizen participation in governance issues?
- May you give me a run down of the services that the municipality offers to its citizens via online means?
- Do you believe that e-democracy is all about electronic voting? If no, what would you consider to be its values and principles?
- Considering the socio-economic conditions of the NMBM, do you think it is a reality that the Internet may be an ideal tool to enhance democracy?



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- In terms of service delivery, what role has the Internet played?
- What kinds of policies have been put in place with regards to this?
- How do you make sure that you are adhering to these policies when you're interacting with the public?
- Any examples of memos, letters, minutes of meetings, proposals or progress reports etc related to e-governance that you may provide for me?



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## Appendix 3: Interview Questions for the NMBM Citizens

- Does the municipality give you space to contribute in the decision-making processes of public affairs? If yes, in which issues have you ever been consulted about?
  - What channels are available in your municipality to ensure that you participate in issues to do with its running?
  - Do you think your input gets full consideration in the decision-making process by the municipal authorities? Follow-up question (requiring some elaboration) depending on the answer!
  - How often do you make contributions/complaints/enquiries etc to the municipal authorities over the municipal website?
  - How often do you respond to research on any aspect on the website?
  - Did you receive feedback? If yes, after how long?
- 
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- Where do you get access to the Internet?
  - Is language any form of a barrier to your effective contribution to debates on the municipal website?
  - What kind of issues have you contributed/consulted on?
  - Do you think the website is interactive and user-friendly? (Please elaborate).
  - How would you think the website could be adapted to ensure that more citizen participation is enhanced?
  - What municipal services do you pay/conduct over the Internet/municipal website?
  - How has the adoption of the municipal website impacted on service delivery?
  - What would you consider to be the current state of the website in terms of information dissemination versus being deliberative/interactive?

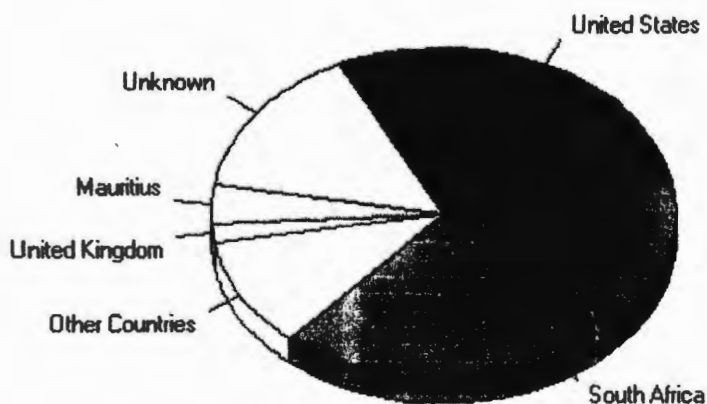
## Summary

<b>Hits</b>	
Total Hits	64,736,189
Average Hits per Day	75,099
Average Hits per Visitor	49.32
Cached Requests	17,959,978
Failed Requests	69,119
<b>Page Views</b>	
Total Page Views	8,526,328
Average Page Views per Day	9,891
Average Page Views per Visitor	6.50
<b>Visitors</b>	
Total Visitors	1,312,451
Average Visitors per Day	1,522
Total Unique IPs	308,580
<b>Bandwidth</b>	
Total Bandwidth	907.84 GB
Average Bandwidth per Day	1.05 GB
Average Bandwidth per Hit	14.70 KB
Average Bandwidth per Visitor	725.31 KB



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### Most Active Countries



### Most Active Countries

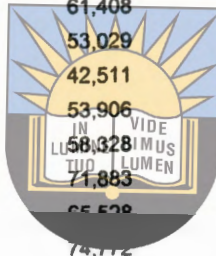
	Country	Hits	Visitors	% of Total Visitors	Bandwidth (KB)
1	South Africa	34,095,713	516,973	39.39%	453,538,260
2	United States	9,791,237	385,368	29.36%	213,721,129
3	Unknown	14,953,247	192,893	14.70%	180,241,807

4	Mauritius	2,479,037	50,520	3.85%	35,391,064
5	United Kingdom	968,489	23,536	1.79%	15,576,162
6	Germany	517,061	22,122	1.69%	10,043,157
7	China	41,192	16,630	1.27%	638,957
8	France	120,214	7,110	0.54%	2,236,957
9	Brazil	124,231	6,762	0.52%	3,864,175
10	Ireland	60,585	6,081	0.46%	1,537,543
11	Italy	100,681	5,432	0.41%	2,461,739
12	India	116,646	5,260	0.40%	1,597,354
13	Australia	139,525	5,125	0.39%	2,858,715
14	Canada	112,455	5,112	0.39%	2,164,805
15	Netherlands	138,422	4,762	0.36%	3,264,822
16	Sweden	84,036	3,314	0.25%	1,111,785
17	Thailand	11,825	2,830	0.22%	332,271
18	Poland	33,739	2,810	0.21%	1,101,214
19	Switzerland	50,091	2,656	0.20%	804,621
20	Turkey	19,052	2,233	0.17%	517,993
21	Belgium	40,166	2,223	0.17%	752,053
22	Egypt	9,777	2,220	0.17%	263,160
23	Spain	39,516	2,131	0.16%	1,045,992
24	Japan	42,102	2,068	0.16%	913,756
25	Saudi Arabia	11,937	1,937	0.15%	236,224
26	Singapore	11,907	1,905	0.15%	342,404
27	United Arab Emirates	28,305	1,664	0.13%	610,554
28	New Zealand	40,813	1,520	0.12%	845,838
29	Portugal	17,304	1,364	0.10%	545,765
30	Mexico	22,308	1,347	0.10%	922,501
31	Swaziland	68,500	1,269	0.10%	922,212
32	Finland	11,954	1,219	0.09%	191,377
33	Russian Federation	13,079	1,187	0.09%	567,883
34	Israel	17,198	1,058	0.08%	286,727
35	Lesotho	9,510	1,047	0.08%	104,460
36	Indonesia	13,171	933	0.07%	388,599
37	Argentina	21,331	895	0.07%	826,891
38	Austria	21,106	869	0.07%	383,334
39	Norway	20,344	789	0.06%	340,862
40	Denmark	15,836	776	0.06%	283,012
41	Malaysia	15,693	733	0.06%	255,533
42	Hong Kong	11,130	710	0.05%	358,063
43	Romania	8,340	639	0.05%	245,627
44	Hungary	9,946	567	0.04%	240,387
45	Iran	6,612	557	0.04%	131,607
46	Korea, Republic of	15,421	557	0.04%	210,423
47	Greece	10,820	534	0.04%	326,358
48	Lithuania	5,280	496	0.04%	162,126
49	Czechia	12,780	457	0.03%	268,396
50	Morocco	2,938	442	0.03%	89,095
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>64,532,602</b>	<b>1,301,636</b>	<b>99.18%</b>	<b>946,065,773</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>64,736,189</b>	<b>1,312,451</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>951,939,001</b>

#### Activity by Month

Month	Hits	Visitors	Bandwidth (KB)
Mar 2007	24,245	350	0
Apr 2007	21,359	499	0

May 2007	15,346	415	0
Jun 2007	21,220	538	156,605
Jul 2007	13,870	352	141,584
Aug 2007	837,911	19,811	8,919,203
Sep 2007	1,166,111	28,028	12,268,850
Oct 2007	1,267,552	29,611	14,582,989
Nov 2007	1,258,111	28,472	15,738,594
Dec 2007	815,265	22,417	10,269,660
Jan 2008	1,712,908	38,485	22,283,328
Feb 2008	3,899,040	55,063	55,410,411
Mar 2008	4,212,550	64,796	53,036,586
Apr 2008	6,150,116	108,476	97,398,545
May 2008	2,877,547	68,816	38,528,263
Jun 2008	2,605,518	58,007	31,237,710
Jul 2008	3,008,188	58,558	35,245,538
Aug 2008	2,870,313	53,963	33,686,056
Sep 2008	2,817,434	57,183	34,209,042
Oct 2008	2,798,589	61,408	39,184,921
Nov 2008	2,578,411	53,029	36,816,759
Dec 2008	1,975,577	42,511	33,222,971
Jan 2009	2,883,017	53,906	50,233,284
Feb 2009	3,171,941	58,328	47,935,844
Mar 2009	3,841,897	71,883	55,506,927
Apr 2009	2,902,644	65,528	50,842,633
May 2009	3,371,758	74,772	64,183,772
Jun 2009	4,161,724	107,588	85,728,243
Jul 2009	1,456,027	29,658	25,170,669
<b>Total</b>	<b>64,736,189</b>	<b>1,312,451</b>	<b>951,939,001</b>

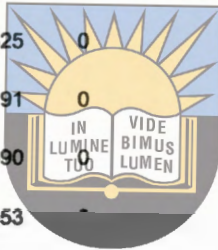


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### Most Popular Pages

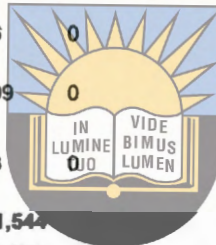
	Page	Hits	Incomplete Requests	Visitors	Bandwidth (KB)
1	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/imagelist.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/imagelist.aspx</a>	1,565,387	0	487,490	2,244,853
2	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/</a>	1,280,227	0	450,688	19,863,291
3	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/content.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/content.aspx</a>	1,200,383	0	376,703	129,934,282
4	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/vacancies.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/vacancies.aspx</a>	632,584	0	182,682	23,529,875
5	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/documents.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/documents.aspx</a>	465,820	0	172,488	66,098,825
6	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/fifaworldcup/content.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/fifaworldcup/content.aspx</a>	333,026	0	103,174	9,129,535
7	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/news.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/news.aspx</a>	327,054	0	82,483	9,153,646
8	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/tenders.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/tenders.aspx</a>	192,451	0	59,066	5,249,171
9	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluation/framepages/header.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluation/framepages/header.aspx</a>	88,450	0	56,475	98,231
10	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluation/framepages/searchtype.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluation/framepages/searchtype.aspx</a>	178,877	0	56,460	467,807
11	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluation/framepages/footer.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluation/framepages/footer.aspx</a>	87,811	0	56,411	75,184
12	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/events.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/events.aspx</a>	316,210	0	55,449	4,931,843
13	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/</a>	64,699	14	50,719	43,235

	nmbmvaluation/propertysearch.htm				
14	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluation/framepages/search.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluation/framepages/search.aspx</a>	153,103	0	48,072	10,470,463
15	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluation/framepages/searchresult.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluation/framepages/searchresult.aspx</a>	416,491	0	46,040	6,479,025
16	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/fifaworldcup/">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/fifaworldcup/</a>	86,803	0	45,294	1,801,007
17	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluation/framepages/searchcrit.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluation/framepages/searchcrit.aspx</a>	60,823	0	40,717	1,630,709
18	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluation/framepages/blank.htm">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluation/framepages/blank.htm</a>	50,459	0	40,054	22,050
19	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/notices.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/notices.aspx</a>	89,228	0	36,592	1,845,626
20	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluation/framepages/searchdetails.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluation/framepages/searchdetails.aspx</a>	353,061	0	22,338	2,789,260
21	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/404.html">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/404.html</a>	27,653	20	18,526	7,970
22	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/media.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/media.aspx</a>	47,825	0	17,114	11,511,558
23	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/fifaworldcup/news.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/fifaworldcup/news.aspx</a>	66,191	0	14,688	2,048,030
24	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/newsletter.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/newsletter.aspx</a>	21,690	0	12,710	349,108
25	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/feedback.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/feedback.aspx</a>	17,553		12,512	238,324
26	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluation/framepages/search2.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluation/framepages/search2.aspx</a>	6,322	0	11,706	15,681
27	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluation/framepages/searchcrit2.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluation/framepages/searchcrit2.aspx</a>	16,317	0	11,675	1,351,341
28	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/search.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/search.aspx</a>	24,094	0	11,103	564,511
29	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/waste/wastemain.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/waste/wastemain.aspx</a>	30,746	0	9,894	866,431
30	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluationsupp/propertysearch.htm">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluationsupp/propertysearch.htm</a>	9,342	2	7,758	6,769
31	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluationsupp/">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluationsupp/</a>	9,317	0	7,422	3,603
32	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluationsupp/framepages/searchtype.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluationsupp/framepages/searchtype.aspx</a>	19,079	0	7,375	50,945
33	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluationsupp/framepages/header.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluationsupp/framepages/header.aspx</a>	10,003	0	7,366	11,011
34	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluationsupp/framepages/footer.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluationsupp/framepages/footer.aspx</a>	9,916	0	7,325	8,487
35	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluation/framepages/section49.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluation/framepages/section49.aspx</a>	12,827	0	6,324	98,260
36	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluation/">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluation/</a>	7,301	0	5,871	2,752
37	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluationsupp/framepages/blank.htm">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluationsupp/framepages/blank.htm</a>	6,282	0	5,179	3,081
38	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluationsupp/framepages/searchresult.aspx">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluationsupp/framepages/searchresult.aspx</a>	36,075	0	5,093	240,833
39	<a href="http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluationsupp/framepages/">http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluationsupp/framepages/</a>	6,757	0	4,721	5,875



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	search.aspx				
40	http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluationsupp/framepages/searchcrit.aspx	6,756	0	4,718	176,790
41	http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/msoffice/citreq.asp	8,172	0	4,370	3,512
42	http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/picture_gallery/show_large_image.aspx	8,117	0	4,052	3,848
43	http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/media_release/media_article.aspx	4,705	0	3,223	2,132
44	http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/servefile.aspx	3,464	0	2,513	1,467
45	http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/fifaworldcup/assets/panoramic/stadium360.html	2,594	0	2,456	4,794
46	http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/fifaworldcup/assets/flash/stadiumdrawings/stadiumdrawings.html	2,375	1	2,215	3,453
47	http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/assets/puzzles/nmbm_crossword_nr.1.html	2,151	1	1,936	25,196
48	http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/fifaworldcup/template.aspx	2,756	0	1,923	14,867
49	http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/imagehandler.aspx	19,699	0	1,843	121,851
50	http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/nmbmvaluationsupp/framepages/searchcrit2.aspx	2,513	0	1,823	78,848
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>8,401,544</b>		<b>N/A</b>	<b>313,679,271</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>8,500,874</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>314,125,568</b>



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ACCELERATING DEVELOPMENT WITH ICTS

## Draft Programme for the Municipal Websites Workshop

10, September 2008

Eastern Cape: Blue Lagoon Hotel (East London)

Programme Director: Mr Charles Mabuza

Time	Theme	Speaker
13:00-13:45	Arrival & Lunch	All stakeholders
13:45 – 14:00	Introductions	All Stakeholders
14:00- 14:30	Official opening and strategic intent of the Municipal Website project	<b>Ms Mameetse Mphahlele</b> Chief Director, Office of the Director General Department of Communications
14:30 –15:00	Presentation of the Municipal Website project	<b>Mr Charles Mabuza</b> Director: ICTs & SMMEs
15:00-15:30	Q&A and Discussion on Status of Websites in E- Cape Province	All Municipalities/Provincial IT Forum
<b>15:30- 16:30</b>	<b>Discussion on Proposed Implementation approach</b>	<b>All</b>
	Way forward and Closure	
	<b>Tea</b>	

APPENDIX 5

# REPORT ON THE MEETING FOR THE MUNICIPAL WEBSITES WORKSHOP

10 September 2008

Eastern Cape: Blue Lagoon Hotel (East London)

The meeting started late due to key speaker's late arrival.

Official opening and strategic intent of the municipal website project by Mr Charles Mabuza, Director: ICTs & SMMEs

## 1. BACKGROUND:

The Municipal Websites Project came about following the discussions at the first meeting of the Information Society and Development Inter-Governmental Relations forum (ISAD IGRF) held in December 2006. Concerns were raised with the regard to the status of municipal websites in the country.

Out of 283 municipalities only 145 had functional websites, 93 did not have websites and 9 were under construction. Mostly larger urban metros have interactive capabilities in place to manage payments, rates and taxes and registrations. It was within this context that a decision was taken to embark on a project aimed at supporting municipalities with their websites.

## 2. PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- To increase the number of municipal websites
- To facilitate and co-ordinate implementation of municipal websites
- Provide a 'user-friendly' communication and transaction channel between government and society.
- Provide a common and effective look and feel for municipal websites
- Improve community participation for effective access to information
- **Provide job opportunities for young people in the area of website development**
- Build content management capacity in municipalities to ensure that municipalities' websites have relevant and up to date information.

## 3. IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH:

### Website maintenance and support

- The PNC will provide training to municipal IT and Communication Officers.
- Provide 2 young people from existing e-cooperatives for a period of 6 months for each municipality and will cover the cost for their service.
- Municipalities should make provision for resources for content management and dedicated websites resources to ensure sustainable websites.

### Hosting of websites and the portal

- Municipalities should make provision for the hosting of the websites once website development is completed
- Municipalities should determine who should host the local municipalities portal once completed, between DPLG and SALGA

### Website standardization

- Municipalities websites should be aligned to the national government standards for web development, - DPSA and GCIS to provide these guidelines.

### Domain names

- Municipalities should ensure that their websites are on the government domain name.

#### 4. PNC on ISAD PLAN TO DO THIS THROUGH:

The **National Youth Policy Framework** (2002- 2007) Calls for interventions that promote youth economic participation and empowerment through the development of Small, Micro and Medium Enterprises (SMMEs) and co-operatives of young people. The project aims to utilize the SMMEs and co-operatives of young people to implement these websites.

The **PNC e-Cooperatives** programme intends to train and recruit a total of 1 000 young people from all 9 provinces. The training has two components, - Technical (ICT training) and Business and financial skills training. It is envisaged that these young people will establish business using the cooperatives model in the ICT sector..

**National Youth Service** – The key focus areas as defined in the NYS programme are Learning, Service and Exit opportunities for unemployed youth.

#### 5. NMBM CURRENT SITUATION:

The Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality invested in a state of the art website that has been custom developed using Microsoft technologies. We developed robust content management systems which provide template and module driven content management and provision through its website engines.

Our approach was to create a website that could be **owned by all**. By selecting a Website Task Team, currently comprising of 49 members throughout the municipality, we empowered the staff members to own and contribute to their respective directorate's website pages. By doing that, we ensured that the NMBM website's content is constantly updated with relevant and factual content.

#### 6. RECOMMENDATION:

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1. Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality does not share in the same challenges re content and most importantly, *management* of the website as other municipalities.
2. As we invested in empowering our own staff members, the proposed **PNC e-Cooperatives** programme will not be suitable for us.
3. We are not opposed to change eventually re "open source" vs. "Asp.net, etc" as mentioned in the meeting, though we do not foresee that it will be in the immediate future.
4. As for the "**common and effective look and feel for all municipalities**" we most definitely do NOT want to give up our individual look and feel.
5. We would however, be very interested to follow the thought process and way forward that the GCIS envision and are most interested to **receive and incorporate the website standards and policy documents as drawn up by the DPSA.**
6. *All training re web development, enhancement etc. is always more than welcome and we fully support the training initiative by the DPSA.*

This report was compiled by:

**Didi van Heerden**  
Webmaster for Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality